

CRITICAL AND PRACTICAL
LECTURES
ON THE
APOCALYPTICAL EPISTLES
TO THE
SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA-MINOR,
(Ephesus-Smyrna-Pergamos-Thyatira-Sardis-Philadelphia-and Laodicea.)
REVELATION II. & III.
To which is added, A Lecture on Rev. i : General Observations :
And, Sketch of the Geography of these Churches.

By SAMUEL KITTLE,
Minister of the Gospel.

“ The Scripture is found to have a Language of its own, which doth not consist of Words, but of Signs, or Figures taken from visible things ; in consequence of which, the World which we now see, becomes a sort of Commentary on the mind of God, and explains the World in which we believe,” (Jones’ *Fig. Language.*)

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THE
CHURCH OF EPHESUS.

IN TWO PARTS.

THE
CHURCH OF EPHESUS.

IN TWO PARTS.

Part First.

A LECTURE ON REVELATION 2. 1,—7.

IN WHICH

THE EPISTLE IS CRITICALLY EXPLAINED,

AND

PRACTICALLY IMPROVED.

Part Second.

AN IMPROVEMENT AND APPLICATION

OF THE

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURE OF THIS CHURCH.

REVELATION 2. 4, 5.

By SAMUEL KITTLE,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

“ Having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you.”—2 COR. x. 15, 16.

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PREFACE.

I HAVE long been convinced of the value of the epistles to the seven churches, "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," and have lamented that, while so much labour has been bestowed on the prophetic parts of the book of Revelation, so little has been done towards illustrating and improving these epistles; that are at least of as much concern to the members of the church of Christ,—are far more easy to be understood,—and are highly calculated to please and instruct, by the excellency of the sentiment, and beauty of the figures with which they abound. Under this persuasion, I set myself to study their contents, and, about three years ago, drew up a general plan of treating them. I have lectured from them twice,—have shewed the plan, and submitted some of the manuscripts to ministers of different denominations, from whose hints I have received considerable advantage, and whose kindness I take this opportunity of acknowledging. I have, moreover, revised them again and again, and trust, that the remaining imperfections will not be found so great as to render them totally unworthy of the perusal of the members of the church of Christ, for whose sake they are principally intended.

The *manner* of treating these epistles is my own; for the *matter* of the instruction thus conveyed, I am indebted to numerous friends and authors, among the latter of whom, are *Doddridge, Henry, Lowman, Wesley, Campbell, Milner, Scott, Coke, Murry, Johnson, Smith, Parkhurst, &c.*; whose ideas I shall freely make use of in the course of this work, without always attending to the formality of a quotation, or reference. But the three following quotations, referring to the general *design* of these epistles to the seven churches,—the people who are *characterized* in them,—and the *propriety* and *use* of *figurative language*,—are of so great importance as to demand a particular reference, and an attentive perusal.

First

First, Concerning their general design.—"There can be no state, either of pastor, church, or single person, which has not here suitable instructions. All, whether minister or hearers, together with their secret or open enemies, in all places, and all ages, may draw hence necessary self-knowledge, reproof, condemnation, warning, or confirmation. Whether any be as dead as the angel at *Sardis*, or as much alive as the angel at *Philadelphia*, this book is sent to him, and the Lord Jesus hath something to say to him therein. For the seven churches, with their angels, represent the whole Christian church, dispersed throughout the world, as it subsists, not (as some have imagined), in one age after another, but in every age. This is a point of deep importance, and always necessary to be remembered,—That these seven churches are, as it were, a sample of the whole church of Christ, as it was then, and as it will be in all ages."—WESLEY'S Notes on Rev. ii. 5.

Secondly, Who is characterized in them.—"I much question, whether the *personal* character of the bishops or pastors of these churches, be referred to in this address; and the very next verse seems to denote it is not. Compare also ver. 5."—(DODDRIDGE, Note on Rev. ii. 9.) Hence I always consider the character given, to be the character of the church, as a body collective.

Thirdly, Of their figurative language.—"The scripture is found to have a language of its own, which doth not consist of words, but of signs or figures taken from visible things. It could not otherwise treat of God, who is a Spirit, and of the spirit of man, and of a spiritual world, which no words can describe. Words are the arbitrary signs of natural things; but the language of revelation goes a step farther, and uses some things as the sign of other things; in consequence of which, the world which we now see, becomes a sort of commentary on the mind of God, and explains the world in which we believe.—(The ceremonies, &c. of the law, are often referred to, to explain the truths of the gospel.)"—JONES'S Figurative Language, Lect. i.—See also President FORBES on the manner of understanding revelation.

The general plan on which I design to treat the whole of the seven Epistles to the Asiatic churches, is to divide each Epistle into two Lectures. The first Lecture takes the following heads of division: 1. The emblematical representation of the Lord Christ, as he stands related to the church under review. 2. The good, bad, or mixed character of the church members. 3. The exhortation given them to repent, or hold fast, &c. 4. The threatenings and promises used as inducements to stir

stir them up to attend to these exhortations. Under the one or the other of these general heads, every part of the Epistle is attempted to be *critically explained*, and *practically improved*.

The *second* Lecture consists of the grand *use*, as I conceive, of the Epistle, which is to caution against, or recover from a destructive *vice*, on the one hand; or to induce to, and build up in the practice of a commendable *virtue*, on the other. This part was delivered rather in the form of a Sermon, and is entitled, *An Improvement and Application of the Characteristic Feature of the Church of * * * **. The following characters appear to me descriptive of the different churches. 1. Church of *Ephesus*—Declension in religious fervour. 2. *Smyrna*—Persecuted piety. 3. *Pergamus*—Instability. 4. *Thyatira*—Laxity of church discipline. 5. *Sardis*—Formality. 6. *Philadelphia*—Christian diffidence. 7. *Laodicea*—Spiritual pride.

In addition to this twofold division of each Epistle, a variety of *general observations*, both critical and applicatory, are made on terms and subjects that equally relate to each of the seven epistles, and are disposed of according to the advertisement on the cover. The subjects are as follows: 1. The term *Church*. 2. *Angel*. 3. Reasons why the angel has the epistle addressed to him. 4. The declaration, *I know thy works*. 5. The Lord's method of *commending* what is amiable, before he proceeds to *censure* what is amiss. 6. The union of the two characters—*LIGHTS*, to *instruct others*, and *WARRIORS*, *fighting against the world*,—in the disciples of Christ. 7. The *unchangeableness* of the *DIVINE BEING*, in harmony with the *alterations* of his *conduct* in relation to his professing people.

N.B. Any instructions concerning the general plan of the work, or any illustration of particular parts of the Epistles, will be thankfully received (*post paid*), at any of the booksellers, as advertised; and, should the friend not forbid it, will be duly acknowledged at the end of the Lectures, should such instruction be found helpful to the author, in his design of explaining and improving these Epistles.

In these Discourses, a use is made of Scripture, which I trust will not be thought unwarrantable,—scripture language being frequently used, and passages referred to, accommodated, &c. without always attending to the strictness of a literal quotation, which would have required more words to have introduced the passage, and rendered the composition languid. The Scripture referred to, is not always noted by chapter and verse; but where I thought the sense would be obscured

scured by the omission, I have made such reference, and the Reader, if not thoroughly acquainted with the passage, should turn to it in his Bible. Literal quotations are always distinguished from References, Accommodations, &c. by being enclosed between inverted commas; as, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Sometimes a quotation is literal, except the *alteration* of a word, for the sake of making it agree with the *number*, *person*, *tense* (time), or *drift*, of the sentence with which it is connected; or it may be, a word is *added*, to express what the sacred penman referred to: in such cases, the word *inserted* to *explain* the sense is enclosed in a parenthesis; as, "More to be desired are (thy statutes) than gold, (Psal. xix. 10. as referring to ver. 8.); and the word *altered*, is in *Italics*; as, Do not lightly give up the hope of glory, throwing away all your past labours, "*suffering* so many things in vain, if it be yet in vain," (Gal. iii. 4.)—Italics are also used to shew the *emphasis* of any part of a quotation; as, "Brethren, *pray for us.*"

That these Discourses may tend to illustrate an important part of divine Revelation,—strengthen evangelical Faith,—and promote genuine Piety among the various members of the Church-militant,—is the prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

LEC-

LECTURE

ON THE

EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH

OF

EPHESUS.

PART I.

REVELATION ii. 1,—7.

Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write ; These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks ; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil : and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars : And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen ; and repent, and do the first works ; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches ; To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

I SHALL endeavour to explain and improve this Epistle, in the order of the following heads of division.

- I. The emblematical representation of the Lord Jesus.
- II. The character of the church of Ephesus.
- III. The exhortation given them.
- IV. The inducements held out to them.

I. The emblematical representation of the Lord Jesus, referring to the manner of his appearance, as described in the 16th verse of the foregoing

foregoing chapter, has a particular relation to the *state* of this church, and is contained in the following words: *These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*, (ver 1.) The seven golden candlesticks, or lamp-stands, signify the seven churches, or Christian societies; and the stars, or flames, signify the ministers of these churches, who give forth their light in the house of God; (see chap. i. 20.) The whole is a reference to the golden lamp-stand in the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem; which lamp-stand had seven golden lamps connected with it, all fed with pure oil from one vase: Six of these lights were supported by arms coming out of the sides of the vase, and one light flamed at the top; (see Exod. xxv. 31,—37.) This lamp was to burn continually in the tabernacle of the congregation, without the vail which is before the testimony, to give light to all that came into the temple of the Lord; (see Exod. xxvii. 20, 21. and Lev. xxiv. 2, 3.) Concerning which, Josephus says, (*Antiq.* book iii. ch. 8.) “They (the priests) were also to keep oil already purified for the lamps, three of which were to give light all day long, upon the sacred candlestick, before God; and the rest were to be lighted at the evening.” Thus God’s house of old was never to be destitute of light, emitted by the golden lamps, as fed with the pure prepared oil: and God’s house now—his New Testament church, shall never be left without light, given forth by his ministers, as supported by his grace; which is emblematically represented by the living olive oil, that flows of itself through the golden pipe of faith, into the souls of his servants, (*Zech.* iv. 11, 12.); enabling them acceptably to shew forth the praise of the Lord;—shining as lights, by virtue of this oil that is in them. And see *Rev.* xi. 4. where we read, “These are the two olive-trees, and the two candlesticks (living lamp-stands actually *diffusing* light), standing before the God of the earth.” The golden lamp-stand in the temple of JEHOVAH, both as it stood upon its base, (instead of being suspended by chains from the roof of the house,) and by its vegetable-like decorations, appears designed to represent a *growing tree*, feeding the burning lamps by its natural oils. This idea of lamps being fed by the constant flowing oils of the tree, on which they appeared to grow, as its fruit, was not unknown to the heathen, as appears from *PLINY’S Natural History*; lib 34. ch. 3,—(See *Dr. Adam CLARKE’S Commentary*, *Exod.* xxv.)—where he mentions a lamp-stand constructed in the form of a tree, with lamps in the likeness of apples, which *Alexander the Great* consecrated to the temple of *Apollo*. (Whether the lamps in the temple of the Lord burned both day and night, or only at night; it must

must be allowed, that the Scriptures are not decisive, and that respectable names are found on both sides of the question.) It was the fault of the foolish virgins, that, though their lamp of profession gave forth its light for a season, yet, not being supplied with the oil of grace, it was at last extinguished in darkness, (Matt. xxv. 28.) The Lord grant that, grafted into Christ, we may partake with the members of his mystical body, of the root and fatness of that olive-tree, (Rom. xi. 17.), that our lamps may burn bright, and shine to the last!

1. By the Lord's saying he *holdeth the seven stars*, the angels of the churches. *in his right hand*, I understand to be signified the *use* that he makes of them, as his agents in the world; *operating* in and by them, to the honour of his name, and the good of his people. The *right hand* is figuratively used to designate *operative power*, that is, power for working. Thus, when it is said concerning Christ, that, after he had atoned for our sins by his own blood, he "sat down on the *right hand* of the Majesty on high," it is meant, that "all power in heaven and in earth" was then given by the Father, in the economy of grace, into his hands, as he is the glorified Head of the church: in which capacity, his own right hand, as the operative, working hand, shall teach him, or accomplish *terrible things*, (Psal. xlv. 4.) Now, as the power of the Father is in the Son, according to that passage, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," so is the power of Christ with his servants, accompanying their word; according to Mark xvi. 20, where we are informed concerning the disciples, that "they went forth, and preached everywhere, the hand of the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by signs following."—And to keep to the figure of our text: as the burning flames of the lamp-stands operated to diffuse light around, by virtue of their connection with the golden vase, and the pure oil they drew from the fountain, contained therein; so the Lord Christ *operates* in and by his ministering servants, who, as they are spiritually connected with him, and actually derive grace from him, diffuse religious light around, to the advancement of his kingdom in the world. Thus ministers are living flames that Christ has lighted up, providing for them a sufficient supply of the oil of grace, that they are to derive from him by active faith; to the end that they may be useful in their day and generation in the courts of his house. Hence, it is evident, that they *derive* all their gifts and graces for usefulness from the Lord Christ;—are expected to be *active* in his service;—and are eminently the objects of his *protecting* care.

This should teach the *ministers* of Christ *self-abasement*, *pious zeal*,
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and

and *holy confidence*. They surely ought to be little in their own esteems, who derive all their gifts and graces from the Lord : having nothing but what they received ; only shining as he lights up the pure oil of spiritual influence. Such should preach not themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord ; and, if at any time unduly commended by their hearers, should piously reprove them, saying, “ Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man ? I have planted, Apollos watered, but God giveth the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth, any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.”

Those who only exist in their ministerial capacity, for the Redeemer's honour, should be zealous to shew forth his praise, and promote his interest in the world : Such, deriving constant supplies from the invigorating fountain of grace and strength, should preach the word ; be instant in season, and out of season ; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine. “ This one thing *they should do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before,—press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus :”—I mean, that, like ambitious warriors, they should press on spreading the gospel,—diffusing religious light,—captivating sinners to the obedience of Christ,—and building up his people in their holy faith ; considering nothing done, in a sense, while any thing remains to be done.

Those who have the promise of the Lord to be with them to the end of the world, should be fearless of danger for his cause ; as leaders of the army of Immanuel, they should boldly go forwards : If the Lord be with them, it is enough ; therefore, with David, such should say, “ Though an host should encamp against me, mine heart shall not fear : though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.” Yea, in the prospect of wounds and afflictions, they should say with Paul, “ None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Long as the Lord has work for you, he can save you ; his right hand protects you ; and neither men nor devils shall injure you. “ Be not afraid,” saith he, “ but speak, and hold not thy peace : for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee, to hurt thee.” And, when you have done the Lord's work, and promoted his kingdom, by the active service you have rendered it during your life, your very death, come when and how it may, shall not be unfruitful, but do good also : Thus the Lord foretold Peter, that when he

he should become old, they should bind him, and carry him away prisoner; and "this spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God." The Christian hero dies in the bed of honour. Life and death is his, since by both of them he glorifies the Lord.

This should teach the people of the Lord to give *God the glory* of the good they receive;—to *esteem his servants* for their work's sake;—and to *trust the Lord* for the support of his cause. Since it is from God that his ministering servants derive all their power to do good;—from his Spirit alone that the word they speak, receives all its efficacy to enlighten, comfort, and sanctify you: it is to him alone that all praise belongs; and it would be as wrong for you to idolize one of the messengers that shine in his church, as it would be for you to feel religious respect for the lights that illuminate the place where you assemble together for the purpose of public worship.—"Brethren, *pray for us*, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified." But ever remember, that it is not to us, but unto the Lord, you are indebted for light and salvation. Know, moreover, that no affection you feel for your ministers, will be profitable to, and lasting with you, except that which takes root in the consideration of their being the servants of God, and the instruments of his power.

Since it is by the appointment of the Lord, and for the good of the church, that ministers study, preach, and act, you ought "to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake;"—be willing to receive thankfully the word of exhortation (personal admonition), at their mouth;—and "obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." It is, moreover, your duty, honourably to support them; for, "if they sow unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if they reap your carnal things?" Sure as the gospel profits you, you will esteem it your happiness thus to honour those who are the messengers of God to you for good. The Lord will judge those people who occasion their ministers sorrow on either of these forementioned accounts. For myself, I thank the Lord, and acknowledge the kindness of the people amongst whom I have laboured, I have no cause of complaint: but I fear the Lord's servants in different churches, are sometimes conveying their complaints to him, of the insubordination or avarice of those amongst whom they officiate. Look to it, Christian reader, that thou give God's ministers no occasion to complain of thee.

Since the Lord is the great disposer of all events relative to his church,

church, and is particularly watchful over his ministering servants; should he see good to suffer any of your much-loved ministers to be removed from you by death, persecution, or any other way, be not discouraged: the dispensation is trying indeed, but it may be rendered profitable. The Lord permits it, to make you more attentive to the exhortations of those he continues with you;—to exercise your faith, and draw you out in earnest prayer to undertake for you, when you are deprived of those that have often been blessed to you;—and to raise to himself a tribute of praise and glory from his church, when he supplies your loss in this respect by sending to you by whom he will send. Then, when you are blessed under their word, you say with admiration, “The spirit of Elijah doth rest upon Elisha.” Yea, though the prophets do not live for ever, yet the residue of the Spirit is with the Lord; and that church shall not fail of being well supplied, for which he has a favourable regard. How often have different Christian societies been greatly discouraged at the loss of a minister of talents! How often have they been ready to conclude all was going wrong with them; and lo! the Lord has preserved them, and revived them by one of the least of his servants! O that all the Lord’s people may remember that word, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts!”

2. By the Lord’s *walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*, is designated the particular attention he pays to the conduct and spirit of his churches (the church members); with all of whom he is ever present, continually beholding them; even as the priest of old, whose office it was to “order the lamps upon the pure candlestick before the Lord continually,” was ever with them, officially to minister to them, and observe how they gave forth their light. So the Lord Christ beholds the societies of his professing people, in order to afford them the necessary aid, and determine the manner of his dealing with them, in the capacity of Supreme Head of the church. This should teach Ministers to resemble the great Shepherd, in their attention to the concerns of their flock; and make the People of God thankful for, and attentive to, the personal exhortations of their pastors.—(*Vide Church of Thyatira; observations on church discipline.*)

II. I now proceed to call your attention to the *character* of this church, as delineated by the Lord Christ, from a minute inspection into the lives and spirit of its constituent members. This *character* takes the following heads of division: 1. A summary view of their various

various excellencies; 2. A charge of declension from what they once were; and, 3. A commendation of a remaining good quality.

1. The excellencies they are commended for, are pious endeavours to do good to others;—Christian fortitude in bearing trials for the Lord's sake;—and strict attention to purity of church-communion. These commendable qualities are, each of them, mentioned twice, being first named in a general way, and then more largely described in an inverted order: as, *I know*,

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|------------------------------------|--|
| (1.) Thy labour. | 6. For my name's sake thou hast laboured, and hast not fainted. |
| (2.) Thy patience. | 5. Thou hast borne, and hast patience. |
| (3.) Thou canst not bear evil men. | 4. Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars. |

The repetition of the enumeration of these their virtues, may be designed to signify how pleasing they were to the Lord; and, at the same time, to intimate, by this way of expressing them, that some of them, at least, *had been* in time past, in a more flourishing state than they *now were*: Something of this might be gathered, *perhaps*, from the repetition of the enumeration being not in the *present* tense, but in the first *aorist*; (all are so, except *πυγασα*; and some copies read *πυγασας*, which appears to be the true reading), which is *indefinite* as to time, but generally denotes the *past*.—(PARKHURST'S Greek Lexicon, sect. x.) And it is evident, that their *labour* of love was not in that active state now, that it had been in; for they are accused of being in a declining state in this respect, and exhorted to repent, and do their first works (ver. 4, 5.) However, so much good remained, that the Lord delighted, as it were, to dwell upon it, and sought, by this means, to revive the holy flame.

(1.) I know *thy labour*, (ver. 2.) “labour of love,” as we read 1 Thess. i. 3. *for my name's sake*; to advance my kingdom in the world, thou *hast laboured*, and *hast not fainted*, (ver. 3.); hast not been discouraged at fatigue. Thus they had been zealous and laborious in endeavouring to do good in their day and generation; and the Lord was pleased with these endeavours: for they thus entered into his views,—imbibed his spirit of benevolence,—and helped forwards his cause and interest. As we have freely received of his grace, we are freely to communicate thereof to others, and not hide the righteousness of God in our hearts, but let our light shine before men, that they seeing our good works may glorify our Father who is in heaven; who is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repent-

penitance." Therefore, we ought to do good to our neighbours, and pray for all mankind; "for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth;" and we should "not love in word (only), neither in tongue, but in deed, and in truth:" for what doth it profit, if our love be without works,—without labours of love? Will it tend to enlighten and convert mankind, if we do not use the means of doing them good? No, it will not. But, blessed be God, a spirit of laudable zeal is gone forth among his people in this day, and various are their pious exertions to do good, both at home and abroad. Yet there are many adversaries. Satan fears for the ruin of his dark kingdom, and stirs up his emissaries to support his cause. Let us go up to the help of the Lord against the mighty: let us join ourselves to the camp of the saints, and make war upon the kingdom of darkness. Sunday-school, Bible, Religious-Tract, Missionary Societies, &c.—all ask our help, and afford us means of diffusing religious light. O how many of our pious forefathers, have desired to see the days that we see, and have not seen them! Lord, give us to know how to improve these offered advantages to thy glory, and the good of mankind. Sun of Righteousness, cause thy healing beams to shine on every kindred and nation, and people and tongue.

(2.) I know *thy patience*, ver. 2. (*υπαμενη*—*upomone*), or *patient sustaining of adversity*, &c. (PARKHURST). Thou hast borne much opposition, and hast patience; hast suffered with pious fortitude, (ver. 3.) That is, the persecutions they had to endure in the course of their Christian profession, did not offend them: they still remained attached to the Lord Christ, and continued to profess his name, in hope of everlasting life. We are happily delivered from being called to endure the persecutions that many of God's children have had to pass through in their way to the kingdom. Let us bless the Lord for this his mercy toward us,—pray for those who even now have to struggle with the adversary,—and bear our little difficulties with the spirit of Christians. (Religious fortitude will offer itself to us in some of the other Epistles, where it will be treated more largely.)

(3.) I know how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars, (ver. 3.) Thus they are commended as having proper regard to the purity of church discipline; for, walking in the holiness of gospel precepts themselves, they would not suffer any that were workers of iniquity to remain in their society; but exerted the power given by Christ, to his churches, to put away such from among them. And,
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moreover, treasuring up God's word in their minds, and living under the influence thereof, they had light by which they could discern the truth, and detect the spirit of error, (*vide* John vii. 17.) This light and spiritual discernment they had successfully made use of in trying the spirits, (1 John iv. 1.); the doctrine, as well as the deportment of those that pretended to be apostles, that is, *sent* of God; and having detected the false pretensions of some, they refused to suffer them to exercise their ministry among them; and no doubt took proper measures to prevent their imposing their pernicious tenets upon other Christian societies, with whom they had friendly intercourse. This teaches us the connection of practical piety and religious knowledge;—shews the great importance of attending to the purity of church-membership;—and the blessedness of having conscientious church-officers.—(See Church of THYATIRA, for the enlargement on the two last of these.) Evangelical views are calculated to establish us in love to the law of Christ, (*vide* Rom. iii. 31.) and those who are sanctified by the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, will take most pleasure in contemplating the mercy of God in giving his Son to become our High Priest, and obtain eternal redemption for us. On the other hand, erroneous doctrines have a natural tendency to prevent and destroy pious feelings, and gracious conduct, and may justly be called “profane and vain babblings that will increase unto more ungodliness;” either making men licentious in their conduct, or legal in their hopes. Surely then, there is need to attend to *what*, as well as *how*, we hear; since the word we hear, is a seed that we receive into our minds, and every seed hath a tendency to produce its own fruit.—Again, many, from sinful practices, take refuge in erroneous doctrine, hating the light, because their deeds are evil. St. Paul points out this connection of evil practices with love of false doctrine, and therefore exhorted Timothy to be faithful in preaching the word: “for (says he) the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned unto fables.” Thus the secret of the Lord shall be with such as fear him,—the Spirit of holiness itself guide them into all truth; but ungodly professors shall stumble on the dark mountains of error. “God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness.” Here mark—these people had pleasure in unrighteousness, or sinful ways; on this account it was that they did not receive the truth

—they had no relish for it; therefore God, in righteous judgment, suffered them to be deluded to their eternal undoing. See that your hearts be right with God,—that your intentions be pure. Pray for gospel sincerity; for “the light of the body is the eye, (and that of the soul is the intention;) if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, (thy intentions impure, thy affections carnal,) thy whole body shall be full of darkness.”

2: The defect they are charged with, is contained in the following words: *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left, art fallen off from, thy first love,* (ver. 4.) That is, they were declined in their *warmth of pious affection* towards the cause and interest of the Lord Christ in the world; for the prosecution of which, they had been so benevolent in their designs towards mankind, and active in their exertions for their good. But now, though moral in their conduct,—pure in their church discipline,—and bearing up with religious fortitude under the difficulties they had to encounter, for the sake of their Christian profession; their zeal to do good to those who were without, was greatly abated. This, I presume, is the substance of the charge brought against them, and am confirmed in this opinion by the consideration, that the spread of the gospel kingdom is the work that Christ has particularly at heart, as the Redeemer of mankind.—The substance of the charge he has given to his disciples, relates to this;—and the first glowing desire of the regenerated soul is to bring others to the Lord. Pages might be filled with proofs on each of these heads; but I will only refer you to a text or two on each of them. “Ask of me, (says the Father to the Son in the economy of grace), and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for thy possession.” Again, it is promised Christ as a reward of his suffering, that vast numbers shall enjoy the benefit of his salvation. “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many,” &c.—Christ commands his disciples, saying, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” For this purpose the Holy Ghost was promised, even that the disciples might receive power, and be witnesses unto Jesus, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth, (Acts i. 8.)—And no sooner did men and women of old believe in Christ, than they began to promote the interests of his gospel; and, when scattered abroad by persecution, they “went everywhere preaching the word.” The primitive Christians were living flames,
that

that set the world on fire with the love of God. And even now, no sooner is a soul converted to Christ by faith, than the holy principle begins to operate, and we long for others to taste and see that the Lord is good. Who ever enjoyed the love of God, but felt the influence of this principle in a greater or a less degree? It must necessarily be so; the interest of Satan, or of Christ, we must espouse; for, thus saith the Lord, "He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." It is not enough then, that, as servants of Christ, we do no harm,—are moral in our conduct,—strict in our discipline,—and even spiritual in our affections: the Lord, who has taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come: thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," expects more than our prayers: He says to all, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard."—If thou lovest me, "feed my sheep, feed my lambs."—"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." The offer of the gospel is to be made to all: the Spirit saith, Come; and the bride (the church) saith, Come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely, (Rev. xxii. 17.) Angels rejoice over the conversion of a sinner; and shall not every saint be zealous to promote so blessed an effect? But the church of Ephesus was declined in the pious ardour of their first love. Christian reader, how is it with thee? Art thou as zealous now to promote the cause of religion, as thou wast in the beginning of thy Christian profession? Sure this grace ought to be in you, and abound.

3. The remaining good quality in the character of this church, is expressed in the following words: *But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate, (ver. 6.)* These *Nicolaitanes* were so called after *Nicholus*, one of the seven deacons mentioned Acts vi. 5. who was either the author, or else, by the freedom of his sentiments, gave occasion to the heresy that went by his name. Their doctrine and lives were equally corrupt, as they allowed and practised abominable lewdness, as well as sacrificing to idols; which practices they placed among things indifferent, and pleaded for as branches of Christian liberty.—(But see Church of PERGAMUS on *Nicolaitanes* and *Balaamites*.) Thus, like some in our days, these *Nicolaitanes*, under pretence of honouring Christ, and magnifying the liberty of the gospel, defeated its design, and sinned against Christ; but the Lord clears the church of Ephesus from the blame of either practising or countenancing these licentious abuses of the doctrine of grace. The Lord's conduct in this affair, is a call for us to admire his grace, and bids church-officers ask his aid. It was surely abundant compassion; a

bright display; and blessed union of wisdom and of love, that induced the Lord to notice this favourable circumstance with approbation; it tended to encourage those who otherwise might have been swallowed up with overmuch sorrow, (2 Cor. ii. 7.); despairing of ever again enjoying the favour and approbation of God. It affords us a lesson on the wisdom and prudence that is necessary in managing the admonitions of the church, according to the various dispositions and state of those we have to deal with; so that we make the careless feel our reproofs, and yet not discourage the timid: rebuke hardened sinners sharply with all authority; and endeavour, in the spirit of meekness, by milder methods, to restore those who are overtaken in a fault, (Gal. vi. 1.) and have not sinned presumptuously against the Lord. In thus acting, we shall best follow the advice given by *Jude*, "And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." O Lord, teach us how to govern thy house; shew us the way to do good to all under our care.

III. The *exhortation* to this church, may be comprised under the three following terms: Remember,—Repent,—Reform, (ver. 5.)

1. In the *first place*, they are called to REMEMBER. *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen*; that is, recollect, call to mind, the fervour of soul you once experienced, and the various fruits of active zeal you then brought forth to the glory of my name, and the good of mankind. It well becomes the members of every church of Christ to call to mind the history and experience of past times, even of the times of your first love, as a *body* united in the bonds of the gospel, and, as *individuals*, accepted in the Beloved. What zeal did the body to which you belong, shew for the cause of Christ, in their infancy? What labours of love did they undertake to do good? With what meekness of Christian fortitude did they bear up under all their sufferings; nothing being able to quench the pure flame of love to God and man that warmed their breast? And O what blessed effects were brought about by their instrumentality! Light, love, happiness; glory to God, and salvation to mankind, were the result of their exertions. Then, what ardent love to Jesus Christ, and earnest desire to extend his kingdom, glowed in your breasts, when first you "tasted that the Lord (was) gracious?" Was it not your language to friends, neighbours; yea, to all that you met with, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel?" Was it not, in a sense, your meat to do the will of God? When you beheld the wanderer

wanderer walking in the broad way of sin; or discovered a desire towards God, springing up in the soul of any one; was not his word in your hearts as burning fire shut up in your bones? Were you not weary with forbearing, and could not refrain to speak? (Jer. xx. 9.) Out of the abundance of your heart you reprov'd and exhorted others, and, through the mercy of God, it was not always in vain. The Lord blessed his word, and you rejoiced over the sinner alarmed, and the mourner comforted. Thus call to mind what you *as a church*, and *as individuals*, once *were*, and compare it with what you now *are*; and I presume, you will not think that the next advice given to this church belonged to the church of Ephesus exclusively.

2. In the *second* place, they are commanded to REPENT; "*μετάνοια* (*metanoia*) properly denotes an after-thought, or the soul recollecting its own actings; and that in such a manner, as to produce sorrow in the review, and a desire of amendment."—(Buck's *Theol. Dict.*) Thus they are called upon to be ashamed of, sorry for, and desirous of recovery from, the decay of pious fervour they were fallen under. This is very different to the manner in which some decayed churches, and individuals call to mind the ardour of their first love. It is too often done by such in a boastful way; they taking to themselves all the supposed merit of pious zeal they were once famous for; but of which little or no vestige now remains, to shew what they once were. Such a calling to mind as this, puffs up with vain conceit, and builds up in spiritual sloth; to the dishonour of Christ, the prejudice of mankind, and the ruin of our own souls; out of which the love of God dies away, to our eternal undoing,—we thus becoming withered branches, that will soon be gathered as such, and be cast into the fire to be burned. This is very different to a *mere* consciousness of being in a declining state, which is sometimes so far from being accompanied with religious shame, and pious desire to recover the primitive ardour, that those who have it will justify themselves in their frigid prudence, and throw out discouraging insinuations respecting those who now are zealous in the cause of the Lord, saying, "Ah! we had zeal without knowledge once; we thought of setting the world on fire once, and exposed ourselves to many a hard rebuff,—the fruit of our intempered zeal; but now we have learnt more wisdom,—keep our thoughts to ourselves,—and go on peaceably in our profession. Let those novices know, it will not always be thus with them: they are now in their *first love*; but, by the time they have been half as long in the way as we have, they will have exhausted their wild ardour, and be cool enough." Yes; and your discouraging insinuations, and deadening example,

example, may be the means of making them, as you are. Repent of your spiritual declension; confess your sin and folly; and pray the Lord to revive you in the spirit of your minds. Say, O Lord, "my soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word." Yea, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," even "the light of life." *Repentance, not self-justification*, is the work to which the Lord calls you, ye decayed ones.

3. In the *third* place, they are exhorted to REFORMATION of conduct, in the following words: *Do the first works*, or return to the practice of those pious endeavours to do good that thou wast noted for in the beginning of thy Christian profession. Thus they were to wait, in the use of the means, and the practice of godliness; in humble dependence on the Lord for a revival of the flame of pious affection that they once felt towards his name, and the interest of his kingdom in the world. True repentance will ever produce alteration of conduct: the repentance that does not do this, needs repenting of; but when our grief is evangelical, it will be said of us, as it was of the Corinthians of old, "Behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge. In all these things ye have approved yourselves to be clear, (or to have cleared yourselves,) in this matter."—*Do the first works*: this is a call to thee, declined professor, to reprove, instruct, encourage, pray for, and with others; to strive again to extend the influence of the gospel at home and abroad: even as you did at first, so do ye now, according to the property, influence, knowledge, &c. the Lord has granted unto thee. Each talent is given thee to do good with; and whatever langour your negligence may have brought upon your souls, the Lord expects you to lay yourselves out to promote the interests of his kingdom. You *can* do this, because the Lord has been merciful unto you, and brought you into a state of fellowship with himself; you must *engage* in this work, because it is in the way of using the strength and grace already bestowed, that the Lord communicates more largely of the oil of his grace; for, "unto every one that hath (made use of, *namely*.) shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not (used his talent, however small,) shall be taken away even that which he hath." The Lord, when he gives a pound to his servant, says to every such servant, "Occupy till I come." "Ye did run well, who did hinder you?" O! remember, repent, and do the first works. And, in the prosecution of your pious labours, do not neglect often to meet and talk together

gether, as those of old, in the name of the Lord. Yea, in your social meetings for Christian fellowship, "exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Every time you meet with your Christian friends be doing one another good, and devising means to promote the prosperity of Zion; and the Lord will prosper and bless you in your labours of love.

IV. The *inducements* held out to this church, are, 1. A *threatening* of the destruction of their church state, unless their speedy amendment prevent it; and, 2. A *promise* of life and happiness in the kingdom of glory, if they are active and laborious in his cause below, (ver. 7.)

1. The Lord *menaces* them in the following words: *I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.* By this threatening is designated the destruction of their church state, except timely reformation, manifesting itself in re-animated zeal for his glory among mankind, should prevent it. There is a great propriety in the figure of removing a candlestick or lamp-stand out of its place, as pointing out the destruction of a church state; for by the former, the artificial light given forth by the burning lamp is no more to be seen; and by means of the latter, the spiritual instruction that used to shine forth to the glory of God, and the good of the surrounding neighbourhood, is extinguished in darkness. The Lord threatens to destroy this church, because, having lost their zeal to do good, they no longer answer his designed end of diffusing light around them. It was their *sin*, as a church, that they did not do good; and their *punishment* should be the loss of all power to do good, as a society. And he moreover threatens them, that this his judgment should not be delayed long, but that he would come *quickly* unto them, and execute his wrath, if they did not speedily repent; for even now his hand was stretched out to remove them out of his sight; only he waited a little moment to see whether or not they would hearken to his admonition. This admonition, it should appear, was not in vain, but produced the desired effect of bringing them to repentance, and stirring them to re-animated zeal,—as we may suppose from the flourishing state of this church for a considerable time afterwards; but at length returning to the evil here reprov'd, or falling into some other, they provok'd the Lord to withdraw his protection from them, and they are now sunk in obscurity and darkness.—(See intended Discourse on the *Geography* of the Seven Churches.)—This teaches us, that the Lord expects glory from his people;—

can easily destroy a church state;—and inflicts a dreadful punishment where he thus stretches out his hand.

The Lord expects glory from his people. His *essential* glory none can increase; but his *declarative* glory should be promoted by every society that professes his name, and by every individual that fears the Lord. As “the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth forth his handy-work,”—proclaim his wisdom and power to all that behold them; so believers are to be “filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.” To shew forth his love and grace, they are to let their lights shine, and not hide the righteousness of God in their hearts, but boldly confess him before mankind; should their profession of his name expose them to suffering, or death, for his sake. As no man lighteth a candle, or lamp, to have it hid under a bed, or bushel, but with intention that it may be placed on a stand, or candlestick, to the end that all that come into the house may enjoy the benefit of its light;—yea, even as salt is to season the food, and light to emit its rays,—so Christians are to do good in the name of the Lord, to the glory of God’s grace, (Matth. v. 13,—16.) Preachers, elders, and people, should all unite as one to do good, and honour the Lord. And, in our converse with others, we should be careful to avoid matters of mere curiosity, or doubtful disputation, but it should be “that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” Yea let no person go out of your company without being reprov’d or comforted, by your pious converse on the love of Christ, and the grace of the gospel. Pious people of different persuasions, would do well, for their own sakes, and the sake of those who may be with them, to talk less about their difference of sentiment, and more concerning the essentials of religion, in relation to which they agree. Their hearts, by this means, might often be caused to glow with heavenly fire, instead of being soured *by*, if not irritated *at*, each other. And they would then cause bystanders to observe, that they were *one* in the spirituality of their minds,—the sublimity of their hopes,—and the benevolence of their designs: believing in “one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Then would that stumbling objection be taken away from before the world, “How can they expect us to embrace the Christian faith, when they cannot agree concerning it themselves, and hate one another for their difference of opinion?”—O Lord remove this offence out of the way; granting us that union of
love

love in the gospel, that the world may believe on thee through our word, (John xvii. 20,—23.)

If a church is not zealous for the name of the Lord, how easily can he destroy its church-state? Nay, if he but withdraw the arm of his protecting power, it is swallowed up and destroyed by the raging enemies of his cause, that are only kept back by his exerted power, from destroying all his churches from the face of the earth; for as soon as he permits it, they sweep them away at a stroke. Thus the Mahometans have over-run and destroyed the Asiatic churches; and thus the enemy threatens to destroy our churches: but as long as the Lord protects us we are safe; and though earth and hell unite their efforts, all is in vain; yea, through the goodness of our God, all shall tend to establish us more firmly, while we see his hand,—acknowledge his mercy,—and shew forth his praise. Since the Lord will protect those churches that are active in diffusing divine light around them, we should all be excited to emulation. Every Christian society, as it feels gratitude to Christ, wishes well to mankind, or values its own existence as a church; should come forth to the help of the Lord, endeavouring to carry light into every dark corner around them, and to infuse a spirit of love into every individual. Such churches are the guardians of our land: for their sake the Lord will bless us; and when we think of the spirit that is gone forth among the societies of God's people, as a glowing flame of heavenly fire, melting Christians, of all denominations, into one common flame of affectionate zeal, to promote the cause of the Lord, we may venture to hope—to hope, with some degree of confidence, that the Lord will not give up a nation into the hands of the enemies of religion, that he is using for the purpose of advancing the glory of his name amongst the children of men. When we look at Sunday-School, Religious-Tract, Missionary, and Bible Societies, (as before mentioned,) and the success with which they have been accompanied, we may say to our discouraged brethren, as the wife of Manoah said to her fearful husband, “If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands; neither would he have shewed us all these things.” We may look upon every guinea and shilling, expended in promoting the cause of religion in these ways, as a sacrifice presented on the altar of God, accompanied with the prayer of—“Look down, O Lord, from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us.”

It is a sure mark of God's displeasure, when he gives up his heri-
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tage into the hands of the enemy ; for then gospel light is removed from the people of that place. The unestablished having no more means to build them up, are soon re-united to the worldly ;—the few that love the Lord struggle under great hardships, which continue to oppress them, till they are released by death, except Providence opens the way for their removal to a more favoured part of the country, where they can enjoy the means of grace ;—and the Ministers, Leaders, and Members of such a society, are disowned by the great Captain, and appear as troops disbanded in his displeasure, the shattered remains of an unworthy company. Let every lifeless Congregation think of this, and attend to the following admonition : “ Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee ; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.”

2. The Lord holds out to them this encouraging promise : *To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God,* (ver. 7.) These words are a manifest allusion to the tree of life in the earthly paradise. “ The tree of life also (was made or caused, to grow) in the midst of the garden” (of Eden.)—(Gen. ii. 9.) This tree is supposed by some, to have been a *pledge* and *means* of the continuation of natural life to our first parents, as long as they were permitted to partake of the fruit thereof.—(See DREWES’S *Resurrection, Identity, &c.* p. 24, 32. where the physical use of the tree of life, in the terrestrial paradise, is presumed to be that of rendering the body durable and eternal, although, as a *compounded* body, it was naturally liable to dissolution.)—What this wonderful tree would have been to the earthly frame of our first parents, had they continued to enjoy access unto, and fed upon its fruit, as it grew, planted by the Lord in the midst of the garden of Eden ; that, the communicated grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, here, figuratively, called *the tree of life*, will be to the spiritual frames of the favoured inhabitants of the celestial paradise. Even in heaven, we shall need, what may in a sense be called food, as all creatures must be *nourished* by God, who giveth them their meat in due season ; for, to form a creature that could exist, and be happy, without receiving supplies from him, were to make an *independent* creature ; to assert which, were a contradiction in terms. The body requires a supply of the food that perisheth ; and the spirit is, and always will be, in as much need of support from that food that endureth unto life eternal ; and this food, the saints in heaven shall be abundantly fed with ; for there they shall have free access to the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God,—feast upon his reviving love continually,—and, incapable of death,

death, or suffering, rejoice in his presence for ever; having every wish supplied from his inexhaustible fulness. This prospect should warm our gratitude to God,—engage our affections to Christ,—animate our zeal in the cause of religion,—and resolve all our doubts concerning the immortality of the soul.

It should warm our hearts with *gratitude* to God, who has provided such great, secure, and lasting pleasures for us in his eternal kingdom; blessing us with his grace here, and then rewarding us with glory hereafter. Let us say, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.” Yea, though our path should be rough, and difficulties should beset us at every step, yet, if we are walking in the way of the redeemed, and returning with the ransomed of the Lord to Zion, it should be “with songs, and everlasting joy upon our heads.” It is for the honour of God, the good of mankind, and the comfort of our own souls, that we “rejoice evermore; pray without ceasing; and in every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us.”

It should *engage* all the *affections* of our souls to the Lord Jesus. He is the way, the truth, and the life. His flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. It is eternal life to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Whosoever eateth him, shall live by him;—be happy in the love of God here, and be blessed with fulness of joy in his kingdom hereafter. But those who live in the pursuit of worldly pleasures, are dead while they live: they spend their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not; are disappointed, discontented, and unhappy here, and must be so for ever, except they repent, and turn to the Lord; for—shut out of the paradise of God; self-excluded from the tree of life, having refused his salvation upon earth;—pining hunger, and burning thirst, yea, restless unsatisfied desires, will torment them for ever in that place where no fruit of paradise grows, and not a drop of the water of consolation to be procured. O think of this ye that sin against, and live without God in the world! He knocks, even now, at the door of your heart: open your affections to him, ere it be too late; and let him in to rule and fill your souls, and he will feed you with his flesh which he giveth for the life of the world. And, ye that know the Lord, having tasted that he is gracious; let his communicated love be the daily bread of your souls. Feed upon him constantly by faith in your hearts. Make him your portion here; and as your souls are comforted, sanctified, and made one with Christ below; so shall be the nearness you shall enjoy

enjoy to him, to all eternity. O Lord, "whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee,"—should be the constant ejaculation of your spiritual minds.

It should *animate* our *zeal* in the cause of God, to think what Christ is gone to prepare for us. There we shall rest,—there we shall rejoice,—there we shall reap all the fruits of our labour: There be honoured by Christ,—esteemed by the pious of all ages,—and loved with a peculiar affection by all that we have been instrumental in doing good to upon earth. To walk with them by the banks of the river of life; to recal the various instances of the loving-kindness of our God; to pluck with them the fruit of the tree of life; and behold everlasting joy opening in boundless prospect before us; this will recompence us a thousand—yea, ten thousand times ten thousand fold, for all the labour and toil we took in doing good upon earth. Then, "let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto those who are of the household of faith." Yea, let your zeal be animated and laborious, since no labours of love shall go unrewarded; but God receive greater glory; your own soul, and the souls of others be brought into closer union with the Lord Christ here, and enjoy a larger portion of his glory hereafter, as his love and Spirit actuate you in his cause.

It should *resolve* all our *doubts* (if we were ever troubled with any), concerning the controversy respecting the immortality of the soul: for, be it physically and necessarily immortal, or not, it shall live for ever in the paradise of God; because Christ, our glorified Head lives, we, the members of his mystical body, shall live also, (John xiv. 19, xvii. 2.); admitted to feast on the tree of life, yea, eternally one with the Lord Jesus. Such have nothing to fear from death; but, like their glorified Head, being raised from the tomb, and caught up to paradise, death hath no more dominion over them. The celebrated SAURIN has the following observations on this contested subject: "The question on this article, is not what we think of our souls, when we consider them in themselves, independently on God, whose omnipotence surrounds and governs them. Could an infidel demonstrate, against us, that the human soul is material, and that therefore it must perish with the body: Could we, on the contrary, demonstrate against him, that the soul is immaterial; and that therefore it is not subject to the laws of matter, and must survive the destruction of the body: neither side, in my opinion, would gain any thing considerable. The principal question—that, which alone ought to determine

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our notions on this article, would remain unexamined: that is, whether God will employ his power over our souls to perpetuate, or to destroy them. For, could an infidel prove, that God would employ his power to annihilate our soul, in vain should we have demonstrated, that they were naturally immortal; for we should be obliged to own, that they are mortal in respect to the will of that God, whose omnipotence rules them. In like manner, if we could prove to an unbeliever, that God would employ his power to preserve them in eternal existence, in vain would he have demonstrated, that, considered in themselves, they are mortal: and he would be obliged, in his turn, to allow, that human souls are immortal, in virtue of the supreme power of God."—(SAURIN'S Sermons, vol. iii. ser. 3.) This power *will be exerted* in behalf of the soul; the righteous shall be preserved in the enjoyment of eternal life and vigour, by having granted to them to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

"The life that in heaven we spend.

"For ever and ever shall last."

Amen and Amen.

PART

PART II.

IMPROVEMENT AND APPLICATION OF THE CHARACTERISTIC
FEATURE OF THE CHURCH OF EPHESUS;

OR,

A DISCOURSE

ON

THE DECAY OF RELIGIOUS FERVOUR.

REVELATION ii. 4, 5.

—*I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen; and repent, and do the first works, &c.*

INTRODUCTION.

WHEN St. Paul came to Ephesus, he found twelve pious men there, who, it appears, used to meet together to strengthen each other's hands in the ways of the Lord. It is most likely they were Jews, who, having waited for the kingdom of God, and being many years before baptised by John, or some of his disciples, had, on receiving something of the evidence of Christianity, believed on Jesus, and were zealous to promote his cause; but, not having enjoyed any farther instruction relating to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, than what they had received from John, and the promises of the Old Testament; were not endowed with any extraordinary gifts, when St. Paul first saw them.—(See DODDRIDGE, Acts xix. 1.) But, on his baptizing them in the name of Jesus, and laying his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, in his miraculous gifts; thus qualifying them for promoting the Redeemer's interest, by enabling them to speak different languages, and preach the gospel.

The converts to Christianity, in this city, soon became numerous, and appear to have been remarkably *ardent* in their spirit: for, hating the evil of their past conduct, and desirous of the conversion of others; they bore public testimony against the prevailing attachment to magical arts, which was one of the reigning sins of their day. The following is the honourable testimony borne to them, by the writer of the *Acts of the Apostles*: “Many that believed came; and confessed,
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and shewed their deeds. Many of those, also, which used (had used) curious arts, brought their (magical) books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver;" which, according to the lowest calculation, is nearly £2000 sterling, (ver. 18, 19.) This, and other such like acts of their heroism, alarmed the supporters of the long-established system of idolatry. It was already tottering to its base, and threatened a speedy fall; and, should it fall, the sinful excesses of some, and the worldly gain of others, would be interrupted and destroyed. Roused by these fears, *Demetrius*, a silversmith, with a company of the craftsmen who got their living by the lucrative trade of making silver shrines, or miniature models of the image and temple of Diana; excited a commotion in the city, and hoped to have destroyed the Christian cause; but the Lord did not permit them to injure his people: for this tumultuous concourse being dispersed, and the instigators thereof censured by the prudent magistrate, who evidenced a considerable spirit of religious toleration; the design of Demetrius and his companions against the brethren, was defeated, and they were suffered to remain in the peaceable exercise of their religious privileges. But, after the uproar had subsided, Paul, conceiving that his withdrawing from the city, would have a tendency to calm the agitated minds of the disciples, left them to go into Macedonia, (Acts xx. 1.) having confidence in God, and hoping, from the proved stability of the elders and members of this church, that the cause of religion would be well supported in that city; Nor were his hopes disappointed; for the work of God flourished among them, notwithstanding his removal. Some considerable time after this, St. Paul had an interview with the elders of the church of Ephesus, at Miletus, where he delivered to them his last solemn charge, and bade them a final farewell. From the account left upon record of this interview, they appear to have retained a good degree of their original fervour of spirit; for their hearts were tender, and they felt much concerned at St. Paul's foretelling the corruption that would spring up amongst them, and that he should not be with them any more, to labour for their good. On these accounts, "they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him: sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more," (Acts xx. 37, 38.)

When St. John, by the command of his divine Master, wrote this Epistle to them, he commends them for many things, and particularly bears witness to the steadiness of their profession,—the morality of their

their conduct,—and their strict attention to the purity of church-discipline:—but, at the same time, he represents them as greatly *declined* in the *zeal* of their piety; they having *forsaken* the warmth of *their first love*. Hence he exhorts them to repentance, and threatens them with the destruction of their church state, if they do not speedily return to their original ardour of affection towards his name, and the interest of his kingdom in the world.

Conscious that the churches of Christ in this day, are exposed to attacks from this spiritual disease, I beg leave to call your attention to the following Discourse; praying God, that it may be instrumental in his hands, of securing the zealous from the contagion, and of recovering the declined to their former ardour. It is of general concern to every church of Christ; yea, to every individual member thereof; according to that word, (ver. 7.) *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*. In treating this subject, I propose,

I. To consider the *symptoms* of this spiritual disease.

II. Detect its *causes*.

III. Shew its *consequences*.

IV. *Recommend* its prescribed cure.

V. Make some *general reflections*.

I. The *symptoms* of the disease of declining religious affections, by means of which we may judge whether, and in what degree, we are under its influence; may be comprised under the following particulars: The work of God in promoting the interests of religion in the world, is not so *frequently* in our *thoughts*: Our *prayers* are not so *fervent* for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ: and our *endeavours* to do good are not so *active*,—as they used to be in times past.

1. In the commencement of our Christian profession, when under the influence of that love we felt to Christ,—when first we “tasted that the Lord (was) gracious,” our *thoughts* were chiefly occupied with the blessings of his salvation, and the methods of extending his kingdom. Translated out of the kingdom of Satan, into that of God’s dear Son; we felt ourselves citizens of heaven, and had our minds as constantly and as deeply engaged concerning the interest on that state to which we now belonged, as the politicians of this world feel theirs to be in behalf of the interest they espouse. We lamented the ignorance that darkened, and the wickedness that defiled our land, as they opposed themselves to the knowledge of God; and we rejoiced in every exertion made to instruct and reform the people. Whatever occurrence took place relative to the neighbourhood in

which we dwelt,—the nation to which we belonged,—or the world, of which we considered ourselves citizens ; we were sure to view it with joy or sorrow as we conceived the interest of religion would be affected thereby. Had we the prospect of increasing knowledge, wealth, or influence ? Did we think of the enjoyment of any temporal or spiritual good ? The use we would make of it to benefit mankind, in their best interests, and the honour of our Master in the world, was what gave peculiar sweetness to, and made the blessing desirable in our estimation. Our right hand might have forgot her cunning, or our tongue cleaved to the roof of our mouth ; but we could not forget the cause of religion, for we preferred the prosperity of Jerusalem above our chief joy, (Psal. cxxxvii. 5, 6.) But, in a state of spiritual decay,—fallen from grace,—and tied down to earth ; the interest of Christ's kingdom is forgotten by us, or thought of but seldom, or with languid indifference ; for stupifying sleep has benumbed the feelings of our soul, towards what, at one time, was capable of rousing all our ardour. A sure sign this, that our graces are on the decline.

2. When our hearts were warmly engaged in behalf of religion in the world, our *prayers* for the advancement of Christ's kingdom were both frequent and fervent ; when at the throne of grace for ourselves, we never failed to request blessings for the church and mankind. And that such petitions are according to God's will, appears from the following scriptures : Thus saith the Psalmist, " Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee."—Again, Isaiah says, " Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence ; and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." And St. Paul says to Timothy, " I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men. For kings, and for all that are in authority ; that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour ; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." In interceding with God for others, how have our hearts been drawn out towards the Lord in desire, and towards mankind in benevolence. What peace and joy in the prospect of God being honoured, and our fellow-creatures blessed, have our souls been refreshed with. And how has this pious principle gathered strength from exercise, till our happiness seemed all concentrated in the revival
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of religion ; and our constant language was, " Thy kingdom come ; thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." But, declined in spirituality of affection, the cause of religion is often forgot by us ; and we ask for blessings on our own behalf alone, and express our thankfulness for a good enjoyed, merely as it relates to *ourselves* ; looking every man on his own things, (his own private interest,) and forgetting the welfare of others ; contrary to the mind that was in Christ Jesus, who became man,—suffered and died for our sakes ; being full of zeal for the glory of God, and breathing good-will to the children of men. Forgetting the interests of religion in our daily prayers, is a sure sign of a decayed state of mind.

3. When our love was affectionate, our *zeal* was active ; we could not look on unconcerned spectators, and be indifferent to the ignorance, wickedness, or misery of mankind ; but, beholding these things, love and zeal prompted us to say, " Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And, while we mused, the flame kindled ; yea, " his word was in *our* hearts as a burning fire shut up in *our* bones, and we were weary with forbearing, and could not stay." Out of the abundance of our hearts we spake ; and instructed, reprov'd, exhorted, without dreading the scoffs or the abuse of the ungodly and the powerful. True, we wanted more knowledge, on which account we often mistook the most acceptable way of doing good ; but, if we erred, it was an error of judgment, and not of affection : so that, could those who blamed us, have looked into our hearts, and seen the pure flame of heavenly love that glowed there, they would have commended the *principle* that actuated us, even while they censured an impropriety in our conduct. Heartily willing were we to spend (our property) and be spent (ourselves, in rendering service to others) ; though the more abundantly (we gave proofs of) our love to them, the less we were loved by them, (2 Cor. xiii. 15.) But when love decays, we can suffer our neighbour to go on unreprieved in sin ; can let the ignorant perish, without giving him instruction ; yea, permit the mourner to remain disconsolate, for want of our advice and sympathy. An abatement in active benevolence to the souls and bodies of saints and sinners, is a sure and sad proof of a decay of the spirit of love.

II. I now proceed to lay open the *causes* of a decay in the fervour of our love : for there are certain causes productive of such and such effects, both as it relates to body and mind ; and, as we are desirous of preserving the health and soundness of either, it is necessary that we have a knowledge of all that would injure either the one or the

other, to the end we may avoid the same. Now, love is an *active* and *generous* principle ; leading us to lose sight, as it were, of our own private interest, in the ardent desire and endeavour of doing good to, or,—if that be not possible, no account of the independence, &c. of our benefactor, (as is the case with God).—in pleasing the object beloved. Thus divine love, as it dwells in our hearts, leads us to lay ourselves out to please and honour God, and to benefit mankind. The grand enemy of this principle, and the cause of its decay, is a *selfish* disposition, leading us to seek our own *glory, gain, or ease*. These, then, are the subordinate causes of a decay in the warmth of pious affection ; and I shall call your attention to them, as such, in the order in which I have named them.

1. A desire of *vain glory*, or the honour that cometh from man, is one fruitful cause of the decay of zeal. It makes us ashamed of taking so uncommon a course, as that of laying out ourselves to do good to all whom Providence throws in our way ;—ashamed of talking on such trite, low, antiquated subjects, as repentance towards God,—faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,—and the happiness of heaven,—are considered to be by the politer part of mankind. Hence, if the enjoyment of respectability is what we aim at ; the path of pious zeal is not the way for us to walk in, as it leads from, and not to, this honour. As our heart inclines to seek the praise of man, every rebuke we meet with, for being righteous overmuch, discourages us from letting our light shine before others, and makes us desirous of keeping our religion to ourselves, lest we injure our reputation in the world. And, as we propose worldly honour for the end of our religious performances ; should we gain, in any instances, the hoped-for advantage, we “ *have our reward* ;” all that we are to expect, is the praise of men : the Lord has no commendation in store for us, nor will he continue unto us the necessary aid of his Spirit, but send leanness into our vain-glorious souls. The more this disposition thrives, the more our religious zeal declines ; till we become weak as other men, even empty vines, bringing forth fruit to ourselves.

2. A desire of *worldly gain* is also very destructive to the principle of Christian zeal. The mind, when anxiously employed with the thoughts of what we shall eat, what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed,—finds little room for the enquiry, How shall we honour the Lord, and promote his cause in the world ? But, when the desire is to add field to field, and house to house,—to multiply silver and gold till there be no end of our stores : yea, if we but desire earnestly to increase in wealth ; we fall into diverse temptations and a
snare,

snare,—into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. Then we want every moment of time to minister to this craving passion; and though we rise up early, and sit up late, we have no leisure for working in the vineyard of the Lord, and no disposition to give our mite towards helping on the cause of religion. The covetous man's treasure, be it little or much, is all locked up; *it is hid in the earth, in the midst of his tent*!—(ROBINSON'S *Morning Exercises*, Ex. iv. *Covetousness*, from Josh. vii. 21.) Talk to the avaricious about promoting the honour of God, and doing good to mankind, and they excuse themselves with, 'We really cannot spare the time; business must be attended to. We cannot afford the expence: our families must be provided for, and we must take care to pay our debts; for, it is written, the Lord hateth robbery for burnt-offering, (Isa. lxi. 8.)' Have they, through much importunity, undertaken to exert themselves in any particular? It is ten to one but they neglect to perform it; and apologize, by saying, that their engagements in the world are so numerous, that it quite slipt their memories. Thus does desire of worldly gain, as far as it prevails, destroy the fervour of Christian love.

3. Nor is the love of *fleshy ease* any less an enemy to the exertions of religious zeal, and active benevolence. To do good to others, and honour the Lord in our day and generation, we must brave fatigue, infection, and persecution; but these three terrors frighten the cold-hearted from walking in the King's high-way, and letting their light shine before others, to the benefit of mankind. Would such an one walk abroad, and do good? No sooner does one of these appear, than he draws back; and, taking refuge in a place of safety, he cries, "There is a lion in the way,—a lion in the streets." Is such a man low in his circumstances? He would like to relieve the necessitous, and help forward the work of God; but he cannot do this without greater diligence in his calling, and he does not love labour. Are his circumstances easy? He would instruct the ignorant, visit the indigent, &c.; but he cannot do it without undergoing fatigue. Does a plan present itself of teaching cleanliness to the poor, or administering health to the sick? He wishes the institution well: he says he will pray for its success; yea, it may be, he countenances it by his pecuniary aid; but he begs to be excused taking a more active part, lest his health should be injured. Is the prevalence of vice the subject of conversation? He says, it occasions him great heaviness of mind; that he had formed many plans to suppress it: but the times are so degenerate; men have become so hardened, profane, and rebellious, that he

he has no hope of doing any good among them. The fact is, he shudders at the thought of bearing the cross of Christ; being a lover of his own ease, more than a lover of God. Thus does *softness* destroy Christian fervour. How happily had HOWARD, the *Philanthropist*, overcome this softness of temper, when he “dived into the depth of dungeons, and plunged into the infection of hospitals; to survey the mansions of sorrow and pain; to take the gauge and dimensions of misery, depression, and contempt; to remember the forgotten; and to attend to the neglected!”—(See also the life of SILAS TOLD.) And how noble was the heroic zeal of the first Christians, and many in other ages, who took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

III. The next thing to be considered, is the *effects* of decay in Christian fervour. As every disease is attended with some bad effects; so this is not without its fatal consequences, which are such as follow: Darkness of understanding;—Weakness of spiritual power;—Destruction of religious comfort.

I. Decay of love brings *darkness* upon the mind, so that we no longer see clearly how we ought to act. While the eye of the soul—the intention of the mind, was single, our prevailing desire being to glorify God; our whole body was full of light; we had a clear discernment how it became us to act in the various circumstances in which we were placed. We then saw where reproof, instruction, or encouragement, was needful, or what was likely to promote the cause of religion. And when we conceived of the Lord as saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” we were ready to reply, “Here am I, send me.” But when our minds became divided between desires after honour, profit, and ease, on the one hand; and a faint wish to do as God would have us, on the other; our judgment was biassed by means of our passions, and we approved of that which, in times past, we should have condemned, as savouring of worldly prudence, and not of Christian piety. If the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness; and no man can serve two masters. It was because the affections of the Jews of old were entangled with the things of time and sense, that they could not discern the Messiah in the person of Jesus Christ; for, how could they believe in the Son of God, while they received honour one of another, and had no relish for that honour that cometh from God only? (John v. 44.) As love declines in our souls through the prevalence of carnal affections, we withdraw from the light of the Sun of Righteousness,—walk in darkness, and know not how

how to act. We no longer discern, with any clearness, *what* ought to be done, or *how* it ought to be done. We cannot see it *our* duty to make such exertions as are necessary to promote a good design; once we were active in doing good: now we indulge *ourselves* in spiritual indolence, and blame *others* because *they* do not discharge the duties of their calling. We cannot discover the best *opportunity* for doing good; but, after we have formed the design of serving mankind, or the cause of religion, we wait for circumstances to become so favourable, that, either the opportunity passes by before we are aware of it, or the desire decays, and we begin to doubt the necessity and propriety of doing any thing in the affair. Thus a cold heart has a natural tendency to becloud the understanding.

2. Decay of love *weakens* the soul, so that we cannot run the way of God's commands, or even stand in the path of duty. When faith and love were in lively exercise, we derived strength from Christ continually, who communicated of his aid abundantly, according to his love, and our soul's necessity. Then we were strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, and were well able to do and suffer all that to which he called us. Then our light shone, because we were richly supplied with the invigorating oil of his grace. But now faith and love being injured, we are like a lamp that burns weak and faint, from the necessary supply of oil being obstructed and withheld; for the lamp may as well be expected to shine without a supply of oil;—the branch to bear fruit, independent of the nourishment it receives from the stock;—or the arm to be strong, when the animal juices no longer circulate through it; as the soul to be able to perform the evangelical duties of a Christian life, when we no longer draw forth the rich supplies of the Spirit of holiness. As the desire of honour, wealth, or ease, gains the ascendancy, faith and love decline, and then, though upon any particular call to duty, we say, with shorn Sampson, "I will go out, as at other times before, and shake myself;" act as I used to do, for the glory of God;—like him we find that our strength is gone, and we are unable to accomplish our design. A *double minded* man—"the sinner that goeth two ways," (Ecclesiasticus ii. 12.) whose heart is divided between serving God, on the one hand, and his lusts, on the other,—"*is like a wave of the sea, driven about with the winds and tossed.*" Such characters, as it respects every good design, are "*unstable as water, they shall not excel.*" Thus, carnal affections despoil the soul of all its power, and leave us withered and fruitless branches, dishonouring the "*true Vine,*" to which we are united.

3. Decay of love is the destruction of religious *comfort*; affecting the

the soul in some such manner as languor and inactivity does the animal system. Activity is the proper state of animate nature ; it tends to give a briskness to the circulation of the fluids ;—to strengthen the ligaments ;—and render the different functions easy and agreeable. But when the person is inactive and lethargic, the animal juices move slowly ; the limbs grow stiff ; the heart is heavy ; and the person, who perhaps fondly hoped to find much comfort from epicurean indolence, is afflicted with heaviness, discontent, nervous affections, the spleen, gout, &c. ; which disorders are always fed, and sometimes brought on by inactivity. Whoever values the health of their bodies, will take care to be constantly employed ; as sitting in an idle chair, is little preferable to being stretched upon the rack. The active person, alone, enjoys the benefit of the invigorating influence of the vital flame. The Spirit of God in the hearts of his people, is the vital principle that unites them to Christ Jesus their living Head. When their faith and love are active, this blessed oil of grace circulates freely through their souls, as the oil of gladness with which the Lord has anointed them, (Heb. i. 9.) ; they are in Christ by faith, and he is in them by his Spirit ; therefore, they “ rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.” Every pious desire they breathe,—every benevolent plan they form,—and every good work they engage in, draws forth more of the grace of the Saviour: Their peace is as a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea, (Isa. xlviii. 18.) But when love declines, and faith is inactive, we draw forth but small supplies of grace ; seldom have our hearts enlarged with benevolence towards others,—warmed with zeal for God,—or gladdened by beholding his work prosper in our hands ; small is the consolation of the Spirit, but many and alarming our fears, lest the Lord should cast us off for ever ; treating us as withered branches, which “ men gather, and cast into the fire, and they are burned.”

IV. It only remains to recommend the remedy prescribed, by shewing the property and power of its different ingredients ; by a consideration of which, it will appear highly calculated to counteract the spiritual disease of decayed religious affections. The remedy prescribed is, that we *remember, repent, and do our first works*. By the *first* of these, we call to mind our past experience, &c. ; by the *second*, are sorry on account of our present decline ; and, by the *third*, vigorously engage, as in the beginning of our Christian profession, in promoting the interests of religion in the world. Whosoever is declined in Christian ardour, and would gladly recover the warmth of their first love, must

must take these steps; and, provided they do so in the fear and strength of the Lord, they shall not be disappointed in their hopes. I presume, the following considerations will set this encouraging truth in so clear a light, as to induce every such character to attend to these gracious directions.

1. *Remembering*, or calling to mind, our former experience, so as to cause it to pass in review before us, is calculated to excite our wonder at the condescending goodness of God, that he should regard mankind in mercy; and our gratitude for the gracious visits with which he has blessed our souls. It makes us conscious that our affections are not so spiritual,—our souls so fervent,—nor our zeal so active, as they have been in times past. Our desires are thus drawn out after the Lord, that he may again visit us, to recover us from this spiritual deadness; and our *hope* is encouraged to look up to Him who waits to be gracious;—can multiply pardons, and says, “Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.” Thus, while we think over the past mercies that we have received at the hands of the Lord, the love we have felt to his name, and the delight we have found in his ways; what spiritual joy we have felt, while blessing the name of the Lord, or doing good to our fellow creatures! How fervent our prayers have been for the good of others! How laborious our love in ministering to them! And how animated our joy when we have succeeded in our benevolent designs! How often the Lord has drawn near to spread his banner of love over us, and admitted us into his pavilion, so that we dwelt in the secret place of the Most High, and abode under the shadow of the Almighty, (Psal. xxvii. 5. xci. 1.) While we think over these things, wonder, gratitude, conviction, desire, and hope, all profitably affect the mind. Thus is recollection of past experience in the ways of the Lord, calculated to revive the declining flame of love.

2. *Repentance*, (as was observed, Part I. Head iii. § 2.) is such a recollecting of our own actions, as produces sorrow in the review, and a desire of amendment. Religious shame covers the gracious soul, when it thinks how it has deserted the cause of Christ, to take thought for its own honour, profit, or ease. It is filled with confusion, to think that it should decline in love and zeal in the cause of the blessed Redeemer, who has manifested such ardour of affection towards us, that, after shedding his own blood to atone for our sins, he is ascended to heaven to prepare a place for us, and has forgiven our sins, and adopted us into his family. These things cause the soul to say, with *Ezra*, “O my God! I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee,

my God." The penitent soul feels *dislike* to, yea, disgust against, the things that have alienated our affections from the Lord, and damped our zeal in his cause. Hence it says with holy indignation, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Yea, it casts away with abhorrence, the ornaments with which it used to array its golden idols, saying unto them, "Get thee hence," (Isa. xxx. 22.) *Indignation* against carnal practices, is mentioned as one ingredient in the repentance of the Corinthians, (2 Cor. vii. 11.) The true penitent is led to *confess* his error to Almighty God; and his confession is the language of a lowly, broken, and contrite heart. Ashamed and distressed before the Lord, such say, with the prophet Jeremiah, "Our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee;" and add, with David, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults." And the true penitent is also very earnest in his prayers, that God may be gracious unto him, forgiving him his backslidings, and healing his soul. Thus the Lord has commanded, saying, by *Hosea*, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips," that is, praise thy name, for thy great mercy extended unto us. Thus David, and the Israelites, in their temple-worship, prayed, saying, "Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger towards us to cease. Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation." Thus repentance is calculated to revive the former flame, as it overwhelms the gracious soul with self-abasement, on account of its declined state;—causes fixed dislike to the vanities that have damped its zeal;—leads to penitential confession;—and stirs up to earnest prayer.

3. Returning with that measure of strength which we enjoy, as branches in Christ, the true Vine, or as members of his mystical body; to the *performance* of those *works* of evangelical piety that we abounded in during the ardour of our first love: is the *third* step towards regaining the warmth of spiritual affection we once felt. It is actual practice in any thing that makes masters thereof. Were you desirous of becoming proficient in any mechanical art, you might gain an insight into it from books,—understand more concerning it by means of a living instructor, especially if he should second his instructions by performing different operations in your presence: but it is *practice* alone that can make it familiar to you. By this you will learn far more than you could any other way; for thus you take hold of the instructions you have received, and make them your own. How differently does that man set about, and perform a piece of work, who has
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been in the habit of exercising himself in that way,—to what another person can, though he have equal, or perhaps greater, knowledge of the theory, if he have only thought of, talked about, and seen the operation performed. And, supposing that by long disuse you have lost your taste for, and ability to perform in any particular way; it is evident, that facility in performing, and a taste for the employment, can only be regained by means of practice in that way. In like manner, the practice of piety is the grand means of building up in the divine life. Reading, praying, hearing the word preached, and communicating, are not the only means of grace that God has appointed to build us up in holiness: the practice of meekness, temperance, resignation, and benevolence, are also blessed and powerful means, in the hands of the Lord, of making us meek, pure, contented, and kind; every acting of these graces strengthening the principle within. If we have been remiss in the exercise of any of these graces, they flag and die like a branch that no longer draws forth nutritious juices from the stock to which it belongs: but, by the actings of faith and love, new and abundant supplies are drawn forth from Christ, the good Olive, who gives out the oil of spiritual influence, according as his people, as lamps connected with him, emit their light to the glory of his name. By engaging in his service, we feel growing interest in his cause, and increasing love to mankind; yea, as we honour him, he honours and rewards us with frequent and abundant comfort and joy in the Holy Ghost, that makes us say, “More to be desired are (thy statutes) than gold, yea than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb:” therefore “I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart.” Thus is the renewed activity that we are called to exert, as believers in Christ, calculated, by the divine blessing, to re-animate and to invigorate the principle of love.

V. *General Reflections.* The subject we have been considering, is a call to *gratitude, emulation, fear, and prayer.*

It becomes us to be thankful on account of what the Lord has done for us, and by us; and that he still affords us the means of doing good in his name.—The example of others, who walk before us in the path of benevolence and zeal, should stir us up to greater activity in promoting the glory of God, and the good of mankind.—If we have been negligent in the work of the Lord, we have occasion to fear, lest he should resume the talent we have failed to improve, and cast us from his temple, as lamps that give no light; or at least, that our inactivity

will be a means of overwhelming us with distress of soul when we come to lie upon our beds of sickness and death ; for then we shall see in a light that we never did before, that “ to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”—Our prayers to God should be fervent, for converting, restoring, or establishing grace ; according as our necessities require.

ON the subject of Christian zeal and usefulness, I would recommend my readers to peruse the following Discourses : A Sermon on *Christian Zeal*, as exercised towards others for their good ; EVANS's *Christian Temper*, vol. ii. ser. 18.—COTTON MATHER's *Essays to do Good*, edited by Burder, 2s. 6d.—CAMPBELL's *Walks of Usefulness* in London, and its Environs, 2s.—WESLEY's *Sermons on Visiting the Sick* ; and on the *Duty of reproving our Neighbour*.

GENE-

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

I. THE CHURCH.

By the term *Church* is meant “a particular congregation, or assembly, either actually convened, or accustomed to convene, (for religious worship,) in the same place.”—(CAMPBELL on Matth. xviii. 17.) Expecting it may be acceptable to many who approve of this definition of a church, to see what support it derives from the original terms made use of by the inspired penmen, I subjoin the following critique : The Greek Testament sometimes uses συναγωγη, (*synagoge*,) a *synagogue* : a public assembly of men ; or, the place where men publicly assemble : ἀσυν, (*sun*,) together, and αγω, (*ago*,) to bring ; q. d. (as if) a being brought together ; agreeing with congregation, à congreco, to collect together. At other times, the word is εκκλησια, (*ecclesia*,) an assembly convened upon business ; that is, previously called, and actually met together ; ἀκ, (*ek*,) from, out of, &c., and κκλησια, (*ekklesia*,) 2d pers. perf. pass. of καλιω, (*kaleo*,) to call ; hence εκκλησια is passively, the church, the called, that is, the assembly separated from the world, who meet together at the call of the Lord, to hear his word, obey his laws, and worship him according to his institutions. Of old every Συναγωγη (*Synagogue*,) had its own εκκλησια, or called out ones, who assembled within its walls to worship God. This sense of the term εκκλησια, or church, as the called out ones of the Lord, is often referred to in the New Testament. Indeed, κλητοι (kletoi,) the called, may be considered as descriptive of his people, (vide Rom. i. 6. and 1 Cor. i. 2.) The Hebrew term is הֵקָהָל, (*KAHAL*,) an assembly, or congregation ; d הִקָהָל, (*KEHEL*,) to call, collect, assemble, gather together : thus הֵקָהָל, (*HA-KAHAL*, Exod. xvi. 3.) is, this assembly, or congregation ; the people whom the Lord had gathered together for himself, and called out of Egypt. As to the English word, *Church*, and the Scotch *Kirk*, they are both derived from the Saxon circe, (*circe*,) kirke, and more remotely chirche, ἀ κυριακη, (*kuriake*,) adj. the Lord's ; ἀ κυριος, (*kurios*,) the Lord ; agreeing with the Latin *domina*, ruling, chief, &c.—(JOHNSON'S Dict. *Church* ; and for the following quotation from HOOKER, see his third sense of *Church* ; and see also PARKHURST, κυριος.) “ That churches were consecrated unto none but the Lord only, the very general name chiefly doth sufficiently shew : church doth signify

signify

signify no other thing than *the Lord's*." Thus the building set apart for public worship, is a church, in the sense of the *LORD's house*. This, some may be ready to think, is a departing from the sense of *called*, which is by no means the case : the people who assemble in the *LORD's house*, are the people *called* by the *LORD* to serve and worship him, that is, the *LORD's people*, or *called ones*. And the connection of the two ideas in the mind, will be immediately perceived, by attending to the following fact : The time of assembling being often irregular, it was usual, as it still is in some places, for a person to go round the neighbourhood,—say, with a bell, or any other sounding instrument. In other places, they would tell the people, more or less publicly, as was most proper, all circumstances considered ; and thus *invite* them to assemble in the house of the Lord. But however this invitation was given, it was justly considered the *LORD's call*. And still the bell that rings for public worship, be it a small hand-bell, or a larger one placed in the steeple of the church, the *LORD's house*, is the *LORD's call*, to gather together in his name ; and the *people* that are in the habit of assembling together for public worship in any particular place, are professedly the *LORD's congregation, church, or called ones* ; assembling in such his house, at his summons ; and it makes no difference in the professed character of his people, whether this their assembling be at the ringing of the bells, or according to any other intimation or agreement. The ideal meeting, then, of the *church* of Ephesus, &c. is the *LORD's called people* assembling for public worship in the city of *Ephesus, Smyrna, &c.* This teacheth us several instructive lessons ; as that, assemblies for public worship, are according to the *will* of the Lord :—his worshippers ought to be a holy people :—churches derive all their *ecclesiastical power* from the Lord Christ, their great Head.—[Enlarged upon in *Lecture on Church Discipline—Church of Thyatira.*]

II. ANGEL.

By the term *Angel of the Church*, we are to understand the pastor, or minister of the respective Christian society; for it is by no means used in these Epistles as a name of *nature* but is designed as expressive of the *office* sustained in the church by those to whom it is applied. There was an officer of the synagogue, who had the name of Angel; and from his office of overlooking the reader of the law, he was called *episcopus* or bishop. (See BURDER'S Exposition, or DANBUZ and LIGHTFOOT.) POOL (in his Exposition on Rev. i. 20.) says, "To interpret the term angel by *nature* seems not agreeable to what we shall hereafter meet with said to some of them; as, Christ would never have ordered John to have charged them with a loss of their first love, or to admonish them to be faithful unto death, or to repent." Therefore the name of angels can but be given them in respect to the *office* they sustain in the church of Christ, which office has a particular relation to the original signification, or ideal meaning of the term *Angel*, which, (See PARKHURST, &c.) is derived from the Greek verb *αγγιλλω* *angello*, to tell, reveal, deliver a message, which we have received in charge from another. In this sense of the word, *Angel* is a name particularly adapted to gospel ministers, who are the official *messengers* of the Lord Jesus to his church, (or separated people;) every thing that they teach and transact in the "church of the living God," being professedly the *delivery of a message*, or the *discharge* of an office, in the name and by the authority of the church's glorified Head. As a judicious friend (now at rest,) wrote to me; Christ's ministers "are ANGELS, this is their *character*, this points out the nature of their *office*. They are the *medium of communication* between Christ and the Church."—God grant, that both pastors and people may duly consider the dignity and importance of the Christian ministry: it being in behalf of the Lord Christ for whom the former *speak*, and the declaration of His will that the latter *hear*, in the gospel message.

III.

The reason why the Angel or minister of the respective church has the Epistle addressed to *him*, is evidently because he stands in the capacity of the *medium of communication* between Christ

Christ and the church, being officially appointed to hear the word at the mouth of the Lord, and give *the flock of his charge* warnings as from Him, (See Ezek. iii. 17.) and also, like Aaron of old, to bear the names, (the case or condition,) of his people upon his heart, presenting them continually before the Lord in his daily intercourse with heaven. (See Ex. xxviii. 29.) By being thus addressed he was more fully instructed concerning the real state of the people under his care, and received fresh authority to exercise his ministerial functions among them; and by this means, he was better qualified for his work of intercession, instruction, and discipline. Again, as the state of a religious society, according to that old adage, "Like people, like priest," depends much upon the parts and conduct of their office-bearers, the pastor of the church is applauded for the purity, and censured for the irregularities of the body he superintends. Moreover, all *official* characters are concerned in the address of the church's glorified Head to their presiding minister, as he is not addressed in his *private* but in his ministerial capacity, as *ex officio*, (in virtue of his office,) the director of their conduct, to whom they are supposed to submit themselves in the Lord, whose directions they follow in governing the house of God, and with whom they deliberate for the general good of the body collective; therefore, the officers of the different churches were and still are, nearly concerned in the applause or blame bestowed upon their pastor in his ministerial capacity. The responsibility of the angel, or minister of a Christian church, should induce every one who fills this honourable and important station, to be much in the study of God's word, that he may know how he "ought to behave himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God."—To be very diligent to inform himself of the state of the people under his care, that he may give instruction, exhortation, reproof, or admonition as their several occasions require.—To be very faithful to enforce the wholesome discipline of the house of Christ, that the respective members thereof may be built up in love and holiness, and that every occasion of scandal may be removed out of the way. To cherish personal religion, and walk circumspectly in the fear of the Lord, that he may always be able to say to his people, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." (See *Church Discipline*, Church of THYATIRA, Part II.)

IV. I KNOW THY WORKS.

THIS phrase, is annexed to *each* of the seven Epistles; see Ch. ii. 2, 9, 13, and 19.—iii. 1, 8, and 15. POOLE, in his *Commentary* on Rev. ii. 2. makes the following observations thereon: ‘These words being in the front of all the seven Epistles, cannot be interpreted, as signifying a knowledge of *approbation*, as in Ps. i. 6. but as of a *comprehension* in the Understanding, and as signifying Christ’s *Omniscience*—though it be true, that the Lord both understood and approved of many things,’ in the conduct of the members of these religious societies. DENHAM says, ‘Christ would have us always walking in the sense of his *Omniscience*, which makes Him begin all these Epistles with, *I know thy works*; a profitable, but a difficult truth to be believed by christians,’ or, to be always *realized* by professors. And Dr SAMUEL CLARKE considers the phrase, as signifying, ‘*I observe exactly*, so as to reward, or punish, as the case requires.’ The rest of the Commentators fall in with one or another of these sentiments; to which I beg leave to add, that I conceive there is a particular emphasis to be laid on the pronoun *Thy*. My reason for thinking *thy* should be emphatical, is, the different character of each of these seven christian societies; with each peculiarity of which the Lord, nevertheless, declares himself fully *acquainted*. Not to enlarge, on the improper conduct of many of these professors, whose *works* were displeasing to God, the Pious, considered as ‘trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord,’ bore each of them their *own* fruit, i. e. fruit proper to them, and to them alone. Other trees of the Lord, might bear other kinds of good fruit, yea, some of them might bear fruit more *excellent* and more *abundant*; but as the fruit which grows upon any particular tree, can only be predicated concerning, or spoken of as related to, *that* identical tree which produced the same, so every professor has conducted himself before God, and in relation to His truth, in a way, that, in various respects, is peculiar to *himself* alone, and his course of conduct, be it more or less commendable, could not with any propriety be attributed to any one except himself. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ, considered as the Great Head of the Church, and the appointed Judge of mankind, being both Omnipresent and Omniscient, He can never mistake any character, but judges of every one now, according to his *real* state, be it good or bad; and, at length, ‘will render to every man *according* to his deeds.’ For the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Judge of all men, is *qualified* to distribute the rewards and punishments of the life to come, by means of the *intimate* and *infinite* knowledge of which He is possessed.

And that the Lord will make *manifest* the true character of every individual, when He judges the world in righteousness, we have every reason to believe, from various passages of Scripture, and the faithful delineation of character, given of the different churches in the Epistles under consideration. And as this delineation of character, might at once surprise and confound many of the members of the Asiatic churches; so will numbers be astonished and dismayed, at the manner in which the Omniscient Judge displays every trait of their character, before the assembled universe. However disagreeable it might be to some of these professors, to have the most secret parts of their conduct laid open, their consciences bore witness to the *truth* of every thing charged upon them by the Lord the Judge.—Thus will the Book of Conscience be found to agree with the Book of God's Remembrance, as its exact counterpart: [the particular circumstance may indeed have been lost sight of for a season, by the person under consideration, but when adverted to by the Judge, it shall return as fresh to the mind, as if it had been but the transaction of yesterday. How careful then should we be of our conduct, since all that we do is done for eternity. 'Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit; that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy Name, through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*' (Communion Collect.)

V. ON COMMENDATION BEFORE REPROOF.

It is observable throughout these Epistles, that the Lord Christ always expatiates upon, and commends any thing that is praise-worthy in these religious societies, before he proceeds to censure what is amiss. 'This, as *Mat. Henry* observes, shews that 'though He first observes what is good, and is most ready to notice that; yet, he also observes what is amiss, and will faithfully reprove them for it.' The Lord does not resemble some fond parents, who can see no defects in the children whom they love. He is a God of holiness, and none but those who shine in the beauty of holiness are amiable in his sight. Believers, you are commanded to be holy, for He that hath called you is holy.—This method of proceeding was also highly calculated to do good, unto the people reprov'd, since they must be convinced that the Lord dealt graciously with them, commending for their encouragement, and reprov'ing them for their good. Thus, the Lord acted the part of a skilful and affectionate physician, who having administered restoring medicines unto

them as to his patients, rejoiced to see, and loved to enlarge upon, the good effects they had produced ; but, at the same time, being sorry to find that their health was not confirmed, proceeded affectionately and faithfully, to point out to them the hurtful conduct they were guilty of, or the inattention with which he was conscious they had treated some of his most important instructions. As the patients, thus reproved and adjured by their physician, would be surprised at the skill which had detected them, be thankful for the faithfulness with which he had admonished them, and feel themselves bound by honour, gratitude, and interest, to attend henceforth to his advice, with punctuality ; so these professed christians must have been surprised at having the secrets of their hearts laid open by the reproofs of the Lord ; have been deeply sensible of his gracious designs to them ; and have been convinced of the indispensable necessity of attending to his gracious instructions.—While the Lord Christ has done good to his Churches, by this his method of reproof, he has also left himself as the Example, that his followers are to copy after, in admonishing each other in his fear. If we love our fellow christians, we shall admonish them in the name of the Lord. In doing this, it will greatly tend to further our pious design, of promoting their welfare, and the honour of religion ; if we make them and all mankind, as far as they may be concerned in any instance, sensible that we discern and esteem their excellencies, while we are desirous of warning them against, and recovering them from, every impropriety.—May we all understand that Scripture precept, ‘ Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart, thou shalt in any wise (or by all means,) rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.’ May we ever attend to this from a principle of the tenderest benevolence according to that word ; ‘ Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.’ And when the crime, that you suspect your brother of, is either doubtful, or is some private concern between him and yourself, after having laid his case before the Lord in prayer, see that you always speak to him about it in private, according to the command of the Divine Master, (Mat. xviii. 15.) before you let a sentence of your suspicions, or censures escape from your lips, to reach the ear of a second person. And you who are thus admonished, according to the institution of the Lord Christ, and in the Saviour’s name, see that you neither resent nor slight the admonition of love ; for if you do, it is a duty that your brother owes to Christ and to his church, to make known your spirit of insubordination, that the church may deal with you according to the wisdom given them of God. And know, O professor,

whoever thou art, that whatever the Church proceeds to, of censure or excommunication, according to His Word, He, the great Head of the church, confirms from the throne of his Glory: *see* Mat. xvi. 19. May all the disciples of Christ be wise and zealous, to give reproof in the Lord's name, and thankful to receive it for his sake; 'Let the righteous smite me; it shall be kindness; and let *him* reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head; for my prayer also shall be in their calamities; (or I also will pray, that they may be delivered from falling into calamities, or perhaps, into sin, the fruitful cause of all ties.)' Ps. 141. 5.

VI. UNION OF LIGHTS AND WARRIORS, IN THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST.

As the disciples of Christ are called to instruct mankind, by means of their holy lives and pious conversation, they are presented to us under the view of Lights, shining by reflection to the glory of the Lord and the good of those with whom they are surrounded. Hence, after the Lord has said concerning his people, 'ye are the light of the world,' he adds, 'men do not light a candle, and put it under a bushel, or under a bed, but they set it on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Therefore, let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.' The world, as is observed by *Mat. Henry*, sat in darkness, and Christ has raised up his disciples to shine in it, and that they may do so, he illuminates them by his Word, and supplies them by his Spirit. For the light diffused abroad by the Disciples of Christ, *see* FRUITS OF PRIMITIVE Christianity, Church of *Smyrna*, Part Second, § i. But useful and pleasant as the light is acknowledged to be, the world abounds with those who hate it, because of its exposing their unjust and licentious proceedings; thus saith the Lord Christ, 'Light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, (they love darkness and hate the light,) because their deeds are evil.' The men of the world hated Christ, the Light of life, and because he told them the truth, they thirsted for his blood. And the true followers of Christ must prepare to be hated of all nations for His sake; for, they who are after the flesh, will persecute those who are after the spirit. Hence, the propriety of that exhortation to every believer, 'Be strong in the grace that

is in Christ Jesus.—and endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.' This, of *enduring hardships* for the Saviour's sake, is the part of the warriors character which christians are to sustain. Christ's kingdom is not of this world, else his servants would have fought that he might not have been delivered to the Gentiles; and the weapons of their warfare are not carnal, but, nevertheless, they are mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds. How often has the *suffering fortitude* of God's servants filled their enemies with admiration? and better still, how often has the meekness and goodwill they have manifested towards their persecutors been blessed by God, to the converting them from the error of their ways? For a view of the sufferings of the primitive christians, see Church of *Smyrna*, Part Second, § ii.—May He who says of his church, 'ye are the *light* of the world: a *city* that is set on an hill cannot be hid,' make us useful in promoting the interests of His kingdom, and help us to endure with the fortitude and meekness of christians, in the day of tribulation for his name's sake.

VII. HARMONY OF GOD'S IMMUTABILITY, AND HIS RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE.

WAVING all controversy, respecting the abstruse doctrine of Predestination, it is obvious from the whole tenor of these Epistles, which abound with Admonitions, Threatenings, and Promises, that the Lord meant to recompense into their bosoms, according as they should attend unto or slight his advice. As this article is closely connected with the following one, on *The evangelical sense of the term* WORTHY, I shall close with referring my readers to what the Lord says concerning *The unchangeableness of His Nature, and the alteration of His conduct towards his professing people*, in the instructive parable of the power of the potter over a lump of clay, that he was about to form into a certain vessel, but which being marred in his hands, he formed into another kind of vessel, as was good in his sight: see Jer. xviii. 4. The words of the Lord, to his servant Jeremiah upon this occasion, are very remarkable, and prove in the clearest manner, that He remains immutably the same, loving holiness and hating vice, rendering to his mutable creatures according to their deeds. As the passage is too long for quotation, I beg my readers to turn to it in their Bibles; see ver. 5. to 17. To conclude, we know nothing concerning the divine Being, but what he has been pleased to reveal of himself, by his works, and in his Word; and his Word evidently describes him

as using various methods in order to enlighten our understandings, subdue our wills, and sanctify our affections, and according as this is or is not effected, by the means He saw good to employ, so will He reward or punish us in the world to come.

VIII. EVANGELICAL SENSE OF THE TERM WORTHY.

IT is said concerning the pious members of the church of *Sardis*, that they shall walk with Christ in his kingdom, adorned with white raiment; and it is added, as a reason of their enjoying this honour, *they are worthy*; see Chap. iii. 4. As we are assured, from the analogy of faith, that it is not the design of the Lord to speak of them, as having a *legal* right to this distinguishing glory, it is necessary that we should enquire into the proper signification of the word, and in doing this, we shall be much assisted by observing the sense the term bears in other passages of God's Word. This phrase is used, respecting the praise offered to the Lord Christ upon different accounts. *First*, it is said, Rev. iv. 11. 'Thou art *worthy*, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour and power; for thou hast *created* all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.' *Secondly*, Chap. v. 12. '*Worthy* is the Lamb that *was slain*, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.' The same word is also used, respecting the *punishment* inflicted upon bloody Persecutors for their *cruelty* to the saints, Chap. xvi. 6. 'They have *shed the blood* of thy saints and prophets, and thou hast given them *blood to drink*, for they are *worthy*.' The original word *αξιος*, *axios*, signifies *worthy*, *deserving*, *meriting*; also, *fit*, *suitable*, *becoming*. And in all these passages, it may be rendered *becoming*, or *suitable* to the character of— Thus, it is suitable to Christ, in his character of *Creator* and *Redeemer*, that He should receive praise and blessing from those he has created and redeemed. It is *suitable* to the character of Persecutors, that they should be *punished* by God. And it bears a *suitable* resemblance to the pious and useful conduct of the lovers of Jesus, that, as they were clothed with the graces of his Spirit here, and walked with him in the beauty of holiness, so they should be honourably distinguished hereafter, from the polluted and formal, and be made partakers of the glory of that heavenly state. The saints are righteous, as they are *in Christ* by living faith, and it is considered in the light of members of His mystical body, that they reap the rewards of glory. For, as it is *seemly* that the *HEAD* should be glorified, so it is also *suit-*

able that the *Members* should share in this glory. Because the incarnate Saviour, considered in the capacity of the Father's servant, in behalf of the Gospel, *loved righteousness, and hated iniquity*, and was on this account raised to superexcellent honour and glory ; so shall his people, conformed to his image in this world, *be like Him* in the next ; for then they *shall see him as he is*. On this subject of the rewardable *righteousness* of the saints, I beg leave to subjoin the following observations : ' The saints have a *threefold* righteousness. *First*, The righteousness of their *persons* as in Christ, his merit being imputed to them, and they accepted on the account thereof ; ii Cor. v. 21. Eph. v. 27. Isai. xlv. 24. *Secondly*, The righteousness of their *principles* being derived from and formed according to the rule of right ; Ps. cxix. 11. And *Thirdly*, The righteousness of their *lives*, produced by the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, without which no man shall see the Lord, Heb. xii. 14. i Cor. vi. 11.' (See Buck's Theo. Dic. *Righteousness*.) Thus it appears according to the words of the Rev. E. Erskine, in his Sermon on the *Necessity and Profitableness of Good Works*, that ' There is an *analogy* and proportion between good works and glory ; Rom. vi. 22.' May the Lord, by his good Spirit, work in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure ; and at length present us before the throne of his glory with exceeding joy.

IX. HE THAT HATH AN EAR, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAITH UNTO THE CHURCHES.

THESE words are added to each of the seven Lectures, and point them out as of *general* concern to the churches of Christ in all nations under heaven, and of all ages of the world.—O Lord, help us to mark, learn, and inwardly digest, thy truth, that we may be made wise unto salvation, through the faith that is according to Christ Jesus.

CONCISE VIEW of the GEOGRAPHY, &c.

OF THE

SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA-MINOR.

My original design was, to have given the Geographical Situation and Historical Account of the Seven Churches of Asia, in a single number of 48 or 50 pages; but, finding it impossible to do justice to the subject in such confined limits, I am under the necessity of writing a separate treatise, in which I can take a general view of Asia-Minor, and the various important occurrences relating thereunto, even from the early settlement of the Trojans, down to this present day. I would recommend this work to my readers, as tending to throw much light, not only upon the Apocalyptical Epistles, but also upon various other parts of God's Word. However, that the expectation of my friends may not receive any serious disappointment from this alteration in the original plan, I have drawn out the following outlines of the Geographical situation, and state of these churches, accompanied with a small map, shewing the relative situation of these churches, both with respect to each other, and also to the island of Patmos. A large and elegant map of Asia-Minor, the islands, and ancient Greece, accompanies the *History of Asia-Minor*; see *Advertisement*, at the end of *Lectures on the Epistle to the Church of Laodicea*.

The seven churches, that are the subjects of the apocalyptical epistles, were so many christian societies, assembled for public worship in the different cities respectively named in these epistles, as *Ephesus*, *Smyrna*, *Pergamos*, *Thyatira*, *Sardis*, *Philadelphia*, and *Laodicea*. The cities are situate in Asia-Minor, pretty near the sea-coast, and might have been cities that St John had frequently visited, or over which he had exercised his spiritual jurisdiction. The cities were not scattered over a large extent of country, but lay at no great distance from each other, in a kind of clustre, as may be seen by turning to the Map; the following statement shews their probable distance in English miles. From *Ephesus*, which was the capital of proconsular Asia, to *Smyrna*, is about 48 miles; (*Smyrna* lies to the North of *Ephesus*;) to the North of *Smyrna* is *Pergamos*, distance about 64 miles; *Thyatira* is to the South-East of *Pergamos*, distance 48 miles; *Sardis* is about 33 miles to the South of *Thyatira*; to the South-East of *Sardis* is *Philadelphia*,

about 27 miles distance ; and *Laodicea* is about 42 miles to the south-east of Philadelphia ; and from *Laodicea* back again to *Ephesus*, is about 50 miles, in a north-west direction. Thus these seven cities make a circuit of about 312 miles ; and, upon an average, are at 45 miles distance from one another.

As it may afford some pleasure to my readers, I shall lay before them a sketch of the derivation of the names of these seven cities. *Ephesus*, is derived from *Εφισις*, desire ; *Smyrna*, from *Σμύρνα*, Myrrh ; *Pergamos*, from *Περγαμον*, a high-tower, or citadel ; *Thyatira* or *Thygatira*, from *Θυγατηρ*, a daughter ; it was originally called *Pelopia*, but Seleucus the son of Nicator altered its name, to serve as a memorial of his daughter being born there ; *Sardis* is so named from the Sardine stone, which, according to Pliny, is found about Sardis ; *Philadelphia* is from *Φιλαδελφος*, brotherly love ; and *Laodicea* is from *Λαοδικαία*, i. e. the judgment of the people.

The Turks have given new names to these cities ; and *Ephesus* is called *Ajasaluk*, or the temple of the Moon ; *Smyrna* is named *Esmis*, but Europeans still know it by its ancient name ; *Pergamos* is softened into *Bergamos* ; *Thyatira* is called *Ak-Hisar*, or *White-Castle* ; *Sardis* is *Sart* or *Sard* ; *Philadelphia*, is known by the name of *Alah-Shahr*, or the *City of God* ; and *Laodicea** is named *Ezki-Hisar*, or the *Old-Castle*.

Some Greek colonies settled in Asia-Minor, as early as 1124 years before the christian æra, or 60 years after the destruction

* Though I have considered the different Epistles, in the foregoing Lecture, as descriptive of so many different traits of character in the christian churches ; I would not attempt to disguise to fact, that they have sometimes been taken, as prophetic of the state of the christian church in general, from the first formation thereof to the end of time. In this view of the seven Epistles, commentators divide the time of the christian profession into 7 unequal parts, and explain them according to their own fancies. The following scheme is *Dr Sam. Clark's*. I have collated it with the characteristic feature of the churches, as laid down in the Lectures.

1. *EPHESUS, Decay of Zeal* ; is supposed, by way of antitype, to represent the first state of the gospel church, when christians were full of fervent desire after the things of God ; this state he supposes to reach to A. D. 63.

2. *SMYRNA, Persecuted piety* ; the church under bitter persecution by the heathen, till the time of Constantine.

3. *PERGAMOS, Instability* ; the church in a state of exaltation and outward prosperity under Constantine, &c. But as Pergamos, which signifies a *high-tower*, may be rendered *Haughtiness, Pride*, &c. it also signifies her apostacy from the purity of the Gospel.

4. *THYATIRA, Laxity of Church Discipline* ; the name signifies, a *Daughter, a little daughter*, and may either signify the true church, under the oppressions of the church of Rome ; or the church of Rome, may be so called herself, either on account of her *effeminacy* in worshipping the Virgin Mary ; or, by changing the name to *THUMATIRA*, from *Θυμιασιν* to *fume* or *burn incense* : the church of Rome might be so called from her frequently *burning* alive the true professors of the Gospel.

5. *SARDIS, Formality* ; the Protestant reformed churches.

6. *PHILADELPHIA, Christian Diffidence* ; that time of the church which shall be eminent for piety, and, (according to the signification of the name, Philadelphia,) for *brotherly love*, and outward prosperity.

of Troy. The cities of Asia-Minor were doomed to undergo many vicissitudes, first as free states; then as successively brought under subjection to the Persian, Macedonian, and Roman powers, till at length the country was desolated by the Saracens and Turks. These cities, the ruins of which excite the admiration of the world, and whose inhabitants stood once in the highest scale of intellectual endowment; are now reduced to a deplorable condition, and the light of the blessed gospel, that once illuminated and blessed them, is now well nigh extinguished in Mahometan darkness.

About A. D. 716, the Saracens invaded Asia-Minor, and took many cities; they pillaged Ephesus, and subjected the country to great distresses for the space of about 30 years. About the end of the seventh century, Asia-Minor was blessed with a revival of pure christianity; the instruments of this revival were called Paulicians; and though a bloody persecution was set on foot by the Greek Emperors, the holy flame continued to burn till the commencement of the ninth century; but, at length, when these Paulicians began to return evil for evil, and defend their religion by force of arms, they ceased to be any longer *lights in the world*. In the eleventh century, formality and superstition having prevailed to an amazing degree in the Greek church, the righteous God gave them up into the hands of their enemies, and the Mahometans, overrunning Asia-Minor, subjected the inhabitants to unparalleled sufferings, and almost exterminated christianity from this district. The following is a sketch of the present state of these once famous cities and churches.

EPHESUS, that once magnificent city, is now one of the most wretched villages even in the Turkish empire. The beautiful plains, in which it stands, are totally uncultivated, and its river choked up with mud. Its inhabitants are a few Greek peasants, living in extreme wickedness, dependence, and insensibility. The pomp of its heathen worship is no longer remembered, though the huge pillars, broken arches, and pieces of sculpture, of its ancient temples strew the ground; and christianity, which was there planted, and nursed by the apostles, and fostered by general Councils, till it increased to fulness of stature, barely

7. LAODICEA, *Spiritual pride, or Pharisaism*; represents the last state of the church, wherein formality and lukewarmness shall abound, caused by the outward prosperity of the former state; and alluding to the meaning of the name Laodicea, *the judgment of the people*, it also relates to the time when Christ shall come to judgment.—Mr Brightman, however, gives a very different account of the Laodicean age of the church, which he will have to relate to the church of England, as reformed from that of Rome, which is said to be a mixture of cold with that of heat, because having retained Episcopacy, she shews herself cold to a full reform, according to the Presbyterian model!

lingers on in an existence hardly visible. Thus awfully has the Lord, executed His sentence, and *removed their candlestick out of its place.*

SMYRNA is so advantageously situate for trade, that it continues to this present day, to be one of the largest, and richest cities of the Levant. It has been several times rebuilt, after having been destroyed by earthquakes. It is the rendezvous of merchants from almost all parts of the world, and the magazine of their merchandise. The population is estimated at 120,000 persons. The places of worship are, 19 Turkish mosques, two Greek churches, eight Jewish synagogues, one Arminian church, three Latin convents. The English and Dutch factors have also protestant chapels; but true religion it is to be feared is but at a low ebb; may the Lord look upon them, and pour out His Spirit from on high. What a blessing would a few pious missionaries, who could speak different languages, be, at this commanding station. Smyrna is situate at the head of a large bay, 190 miles S. S. W. of Constantinople, Lon. 27. 7. E. Lat. 38. 28. N. Smyrna is very frequently afflicted with the plague. *Howard* the Philanthropist, visited this city in 1786, and gave them his useful advice respecting its various hospitals.

PERGAMOS is a small borough, built of clay and old marble.

THYATIRA. The city of THYTIRA exists in a desolate condition, but has no christian church remaining.

SARDIS, the once famous capital of the Lydian empire, and the splendid residence of its wealthy monarch Cræsus, is now sunk to an inconsiderable village of clay huts, in which a few wretched inhabitants secret themselves from the inclemency of the weather, after having fulfilled the laborious duties of husbandmen, or the mean services of cattle tenders. The poor peasants are for the most part Turks, but a few of them are Greeks. Many superb ruins remain, to shew its former grandure, and broken shafts and capitals of various sizes, lie amidst heaps of marbles, stones and bricks.

PHILADELPHIA, is still populous, containing about 11, 000 inhabitants, among whom are upwards of 2000 christians, who have four churches and a Greek archbishop, but as the christians of this city are poor, he has but a very limited revenue;—may the God of all grace bless him, with much success and comfort in his ministerial labours. Coarse cottons, and carpets, are here manufactured, and the art of dyeing is said to be better understood here, than it is in most parts of the neighbouring country.

LAODICEA. All that remains of the city of LAODICEA, are its ruins; which indicate its former magnificence, but it is destitute

of inhabitants : thus hath the Lord fulfilled his threatening of *spewing them out of His mouth.*

PATMOS, or *Patmosa*, the island to which St John was banished for the cause of Christ, and where he received the Revelation lies to the south west of Ephesus, distance about 40 miles from the continent of Asia. The island is about six leagues in circuit, of an irregular form, abounding with gulfs and coves, which afford very good anchorage. There is a monastery built on an eminence ; but there is no library in this convent ; and out of eight monks who reside here, only three know how to read, when *C. S. Sonnini*, touched at the island, about fourteen years ago : but to supply this defect, they shew the grotto where the saint wrote his mysterious book, and even the hole in the wall, through which he received the glorious apocalyptic visions !—O Lord ! send Thy Light, and save the nations.

Patmos was a very proper place, for pointing out the great scenes that are the subject of the Revelation, having over against it, at a small distance eastwards, *Asia-Minor* and the seven churches, *Jerusalem* and the land of *Canaan*, and beyond this, *Antioch*, and the whole continent of *Asia* ; to the west, lay *Rome* ; *Italy*, and all *Europe*, swimming as it were in the sea : to the south *Alexandria* and the *Nile* with its outlets, *Egypt* and all *Africa* ; and to the north, what was afterwards called *Constantinople*, on the Straits between *Europe* and *Asia*.

And now, my readers, I leave the whole to your attention and prayers, and to God's blessing ; assuring you, that ' if I have done well, it is that which I desired, but if slenderly, it is what I could attain unto.'

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AND THE SOURCES OF THE ENMITY MANIFESTED BY PERSECUTORS
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BY SAMUEL KITTLE,

Minister of the Gospel.

“Behold the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.”—Exod. iii. 2.

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CHURCH OF SMYRNA;

Part First.

OR,

A LECTURE ON REVELATION,

CHAP. II. VER. 8—11.

And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write ; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive ; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich,) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer : behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried ; and ye shall have tribulation ten days : be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches ; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

THE following is the order of the division of this Lecture,

- I. The *representation* of the Lord Jesus.
- II. The *character*, circumstances, &c. of the church.
- III. The *exhortation* given them.
- IV. The *inducements* held out to them.

I. The Lord, as he stands related to this church, *represents himself as the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive*, (ver. 8.) The former part of this description refers to verses 8th and 11th of the foregoing chapter ; where we read, that the angel, by whose ministry the Revelation was given to St. John, introduces Christ as saying, *I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, (even) the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.* And the latter part, to verse 5th ; *Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the*

kings of the earth. *Unso him that hath loved us, and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood, &c. be glory.* As these verses will be considered in a separate Lecture on the first chapter of the *Revelation*, I shall only offer the following observations in this place: 1. Upon these words, *the first and the last*, SCOTT has this remark: "They were spoken by JEHOVAH of himself, when declaring his own eternal deity, and asserting, that *beside him there was no God, yea, he knew not any*, (Isa. xlv. 6,—8.) So that the repeated use of them by the Lord Jesus must be allowed to be a proof, that He is the self-sufficient and eternal God: and as the distinction between the Father and the Son is every where established, whilst yet it is declared, there is but one God; so we must acknowledge a plurality of persons in the unity of the Godhead." It is evident that *the first and the last* is designed to convey the same idea as *HE who is, and who was, and who is to come*; and this sentence is no other than a paraphrase of the Hebrew word, יהוה JEHOVAH, the *Self-existent*, and, of course, the *Omnipotent*. And it was in this sense of *self-existence* that Christ, while upon earth, affirmed concerning his *divine* nature, that *before Abraham was, I AM*, (John viii. 58.) that is, before Abraham had received existence, *was; I exist; I AM; I am THE SELF-EXISTENT*. Learn that Christ, as it respects the *divine* nature, "is over all, God blessed for ever." But concerning his *human* nature, and *mediatorial* kingdom, he says, "My Father is greater than I." This is the mystery "the angels desire to look into." Let us then with holy reverence *contemplate* the doctrine of the *hypostatical union*, (the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ,) and *pray* that we may enjoy the gospel salvation.—In considering these titles *distinct* from each other, I would remark, that Christ is *the First*; HE who "was in the beginning with God," yea, who "was God;" (John i. 1, 2.) even HE who revealed himself to *Adam* as his Creator, Lord, and Judge; who was the God of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*; who appeared to *Moses* in the bush that burned with fire; who conducted *Israel* through the wilderness by the pillar of cloud by day, and fire by night; who dwelt between the *cherubim*, and was worshipped as manifested Deity; who appeared to *Ezekiel* as the God of Israel riding upon his cherubic chariot: and who, when the fulness of time was come, united himself to the body prepared for him, and became IMMANUEL, *God with us*, even God manifested in the flesh; "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Hence we learn, that the object of religious trust and worship was of old, and

and still is *one* and the same, even *manifested* DEITY: that all attempts to *destroy* the interest of Christ's kingdom in the world, must necessarily come to nought, as it is in vain to fight against God: that we are *happy* "upon whom the ends of the world are come," in enjoying the brightest display of God's merciful design towards mankind. O may we be amongst those who "worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh;" who "*serve* God in the gospel of his Son;" who have "Christ in us the hope of glory."—HE is also *the Last*, enduring for ever: for "of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end;" but his "kingdom is an everlasting kingdom." Yea, though the earth, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up, and the heavens, the works of his hands perish, waxing old as a garment, and being folded up by him as a vesture, that they may be changed: yet it is testified of HIM, "But thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." The Lord Jesus will reign for ever, as the glorified Head of his church, "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords: who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto: whom no man hath seen, or can see, (as it respects the divine *essence*,) to whom be honour and power everlasting, Amen." Yet, it is said concerning the Lord Jesus in another place, (1 Cor. xv. 24, 28.) that when God shall have put all things under him, that he shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father, "that God may be all in all;" be known and enjoyed by all in a more perfect manner than is compatible with this mortal state. To understand these words aright, it must be observed, that Christ has *two* kingdoms, viz. FIRST, An absolute and *essential* kingdom, as he is *God*: this kingdom endureth for ever. SECONDLY, A *mediatorial* kingdom, as he is *God* and *man*, in one new person; and the mediatorial kingdom being received from the Father, in the economy of grace, for the glory of the wisdom, righteousness, and love of God, shall, when the end for which it was given him is answered, in the salvation of his people, and the destruction of his enemies, be delivered up to HIM from whom it was received. Then shall the *triune* JEHOVAH be fully displayed to his redeemed ones; the glory of God and the Lamb enlightening the celestial city, (Rev. xxi. 23.) *Learn hence*, the *security* of those who are in Christ by faith: he will destroy all their enemies, and receive them when the sufferings of life are over, to his eternal glory. See the *necessity* of embracing the offer of the gospel salvation, during your state of probation upon earth; for as death leaves you, a saint or a sinner, so judgment will find you; and as

soon

soon as the judgment is passed, the mediatorial kingdom of Christ is delivered up to the Father, and then no more offers of life will be made to, or influences of grace ever visit you.—O then turn to the Lord before it be too late!

2. At the same time that Christ asserts his essential deity, calling himself *the first and the last*, he calls the attention of the church to his *passion and exaltation*, as the High Priest of our profession, by adding, *which was dead, and is alive*, (ver. 8.) For He, “who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,” &c. Therefore he testifies, “I am he that liveth, and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death;” and again he saith, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth;” that is, all power both over the visible and invisible world, is given into Christ’s hands, as he is the great Head of the church. Let the thought that He *which was dead, is alive*, &c. teach you not to be *offended* at sufferings for Christ’s sake,—fill you with holy *courage*, and Christian *meekness*. We surely ought not to be *offended* at any sufferings our profession of religion may expose us to, since the Captain of our salvation has sanctified this path. Was he slain by wicked men, and can we expect to escape reproach and persecution for his name’s sake? Nay, “all that will live godly (*piously*) in Christ Jesus, (in the profession of his name,) shall suffer persecution.” “It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master,” (Matth. x. 25.) Our *hopes* should be *animated*, our *courage* *undaunted*, and our *fortitude* *invincible*, when we consider that “a crown of life” is promised unto those who are “faithful unto death;” that no sufferings can befall us without the permission of the Lord; and that He himself will support those who trust in him. Knowing in whom they had believed, the primitive Christians *boldly* confessed their Master, and *cheerfully* laid down their lives.—Since the Lord Jesus expired praying for his murderers, and commanded that his gospel should be preached in the first place to those at Jerusalem; *mild forbearance*, and *glowing love*, should be the dispositions we feel and evidence towards our slanderers and persecutors. It was the *meekness* and spirit of *love* manifested by the pious of old, that made ‘the blood

blood of the martyrs the seed of the church ;' for, more concerned about the salvation of the souls of their murderers, than about their own sufferings, they talked affectionately to them, and prayed fervently for them, and thus kindled in their hearts a holy flame.

II. I shall consider the *character*, circumstances, &c. of the church of Smyrna, as also, of the church's enemies.

1. The *members* of this church were exposed to *persecution*—low in their worldly circumstances, but *rich* in the fruits of the Spirit ; and the continuance of their sufferings is limited to *ten days*. They were exposed to *persecution* for righteousness' sake, having to suffer *tribulation* from the hands of their relatives, lawless mobs, and the civil magistracy ; (but see LECTURE SECOND, § ii.) They were a *poor* people. *Smyrna* indeed was a rich and flourishing city ; but either the converts to Christianity were chiefly from among the lower order of the inhabitants, or else persecution had reduced the more affluent among them to a low condition. It is nothing uncommon in our day to see the poor following the call of Christ in his gospel, while their neighbours, in more easy circumstances, reject his gracious counsel against themselves, and continue to walk in the broad way that leadeth to destruction. Nor is it a strange thing for modern persecutors to deny work to, refuse to deal with, and even fine and plunder the industrious lovers of the Lord, and then to object to their religion, as tending to impoverish its professors ! But they were *rich* in the fruits of the Spirit, enjoying divine *wisdom, love, zeal, fortitude, meekness*, and all the fruits of a *holy temper*, and a *pious walk*. They were rich also in the enjoyment of the *favour of God* ; the *peace* that passeth understanding, kept their hearts and minds, and they were *heirs* to an eternal and never-fading inheritance, reserved for them in heaven. "Happy art thou, O Israel ; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, *who is* the shield of thy help, and the sword of thine excellency ! Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places." Those who have these graces of the Spirit communicated to, and abounding in them, being interested in the covenant of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven, are rich and happy beyond what tongue can express, or thought conceive. "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good ? (But happy are they who pray,) Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us."

The continuance of the sufferings of this church is limited to ten days : *Ye shall have tribulation ten days*. As to the determinate duration

tion of the time they should suffer, very different opinions are formed. (1.) Some consider the time to be *undefined*, and that the phrase only means for a considerable period -- (Vide HENRY, DODDRIDGE, &c.) (2.) Others again take them for prophetic days, that is, *years*, and refer them to the persecution they were then suffering under *Domitian*, who had banished St. JOHN, the overseer of the Asiatic churches, to the isle of *Patmos*, where he was favoured with the visions of the Apocalypse, and from whence he forwarded the epistles to the seven churches. (FLEMING, in his *Resurrection*, and many others are of this opinion.) (3.) If it refer to the time of the *Domitian* persecution, I conceive it is not because that persecution lasted so many *years*, which I am not clear that it did: but believe it is to be taken *literally* for the ten last *days* of this persecution, during which time the Christians of Smyrna might be grievously harassed; or that it signifies *indefinitely*, that in a very few days the terrible storm that threatened to destroy them would be blown over, and they should again enjoy tranquillity. This accordingly came to pass; for *Domitian* being slain, A. D. 96, the same year, according to *Eusebius*; in which St. John received his Revelation, an end was put to this destructive persecution, (in which 40,000 Christians are supposed to have suffered martyrdom,) by the edict of *Nerva*, the succeeding emperor. — (MILNER, vol. i. p. 102.) St. John soon after this returned to *Asia*, and had an opportunity of revisiting these churches, as he lived three or four years after his return from *Patmos*, being preserved to the age of a hundred years, for the benefit of the church of Christ, (*Ibid.* 120, 121.) For this idea of the *ten days* of the text, see WESLEY's Notes, who, I believe, copies after *Bengelius*. (4.) I must not, however, conceal, that the more general opinion is, that the passage relates to the martyrdom of POLYCARP, bishop of the church of Smyrna, who, according to the account of this affair, preserved in a letter written by "the church of God which sojourns at *Smyrna*, to that which sojourns at *Philometium*," was burnt to death with eleven brethren from *Philadelphia*, at the breaking up of the heathen amphitheatrical spectacles of the wild beasts; when the passions of the populace, inflamed by acts of intemperance, and scenes of cruelty, were fit agents to do the devil's work. This persecution, it should appear, only lasted a few days, and took place fifty or seventy years after that of *Domitian*; for the learned cannot determine whether the date of the letter is A. D. 147, or 167. USHER, PEARSON, and others, are of opinion that this is the persecution signified in the text. I leave my readers to judge for themselves, only observing, that both these last notions agree in considering

sidering the *ten days* of the text, either to mean ten days *literally*, or else a very *short* space of time. Let the church of Christ ever remember, that HE “who walketh upon the wings of the wind,” rules the storm that is permitted to buffet them, and that when it has raged the time he sees good to allow, he will arise, and rebuke the wind, and the raging of the water, and there shall be a calm, (Luke viii. 34.) O therefore *trust* in the Lord, and be not dismayed, for he will quiet, convert, or destroy your foes.

2. The *enemies* of these amiable people were *hypocritical* and *malicious*. Their *hypocrisy* appears in that they said they were *Jews*, (the lovers and worshippers of the Lord,) and were *not* what they pretended to be; since the rites they contended for, were no longer of any validity, the substance being come, which they typified: but had they still been in force, these people having no true love to God, or his ways, would not have been accepted of him, for their very worship was carnal and hypocritical, their hearts being opposed to the cause of vital godliness in the world, and they were in fact *the synagogue of Satan*, (ver. 11.) a company of people bearing the image, copying the example, doing the works, and combined together to support the kingdom of the devil. Alas! for Christian countries also, since in them are found, even in this day, men “having a *form* of godliness, but denying the *power* thereof;” men, who boast of being exclusively the church of Christ, saying, with those of old, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these;” but of whom the Discerner of hearts testifies, “This people draw near unto me with their mouths, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me; and their fear towards me, is taught by the precept of men.” As “God is a Spirit,” so “they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth;” for all other pretensions to worship, are hypocritical and vain.—The Jews were also *malicious* persecutors of the primitive Christians, *blaspheming* and *distressing* them whenever they found an opportunity. The Lord says, *I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not*, &c. “Some think that they professed Christianity; but in their zeal for the Mosaic law, they spake such things of the person and righteousness of Christ, as amounted to constructive blasphemy; but it is more obvious to conclude, that they were virulent opposers and persecutors, who contradicted and blasphemed, as the Asiatic Jews, (the Jews of these parts,) had done in the time of Paul’s preaching among them, (see Acts xiv. 19.) What follows, shews that they were fierce persecutors, rather than subtle deceivers;

for

for Christ did not warn his people to beware of false doctrine, but to prepare for the cross. He exhorted them *to fear none of those things which they should suffer.*"—(SCOTT.) These Jews are accused of *blasphemy*. To blaspheme God or Christ, is to speak *contemptuously* concerning them; and when spoken concerning men, it also includes *calumniation*, a wounding a person's reputation by evil and slanderous reports and falsehoods. The Jews blasphemed Christ as being an *impostor*; having wrought his miracles by the agency of the devil. And they accused his followers as being guilty of many and great evils; but the calumny by which they most successfully and frequently excited the rage of persecution against them, was their representing them as "*enemies* to the Roman emperor, since they acknowledged the authority of a certain person whose name was Jesus, whom PILATE had punished capitally as a malefactor by a most *righteous* sentence, and on whom, nevertheless, they conferred the *royal* dignity."—(MOSHEIM'S *Eccles. Hist.* vol. i. p. 71.) But the malicious Jews did not content themselves with calumnies, much as these tended to injure the Christians; they also availed themselves of every opportunity that presented itself of being *actively* engaged in persecution; retaining for ages the same blood-thirsty spirit that they manifested in their opposition to the Lord Jesus and his apostles. The following account, taken from the official letter of the church of *Smyrna*, (A. D. 167.) concerning the martyrdom of POLYCARP, their *bishop*, who was sentenced by the proconsul to be burnt alive, will prove this fact. The letter informs us, that as soon as the sentence was passed, "*the business was executed with all possible speed; for the people immediately gathered fuel from the workshops and baths, in which employment the Jews distinguished themselves with their usual malice.*"—(MILNER, vol. i. p. 217.) And again, (p. 220.) "*The centurion, perceiving the malevolence of the Jews, (who had accused the brethren of desiring the body of POLYCARP for an object of religious worship,) placed the body in the midst of the fire, and burnt it, (that is, to ashes, to prevent the Christians from getting it).*"—The *formal* who are ever *legal*, still continue to be bitter enemies to the pious and evangelical disciples of the Redeemer; and no wonder, for they see no need of the *atonement* by Christ, and are strangers to the *Spirit's work* upon the hearts of those who believe. The *former* of these doctrines robs them of their self-sufficient hopes; and as to the *latter*, they consider it as an insult upon their understandings, only fit to be credited by fanatics and Methodists. On these accounts, the self-righteous have often stirred up the dregs of the people to avenge their cause, by acts of

of violence and persecution, to which they themselves have sometimes lent a helping hand, and actually engaged in the devil's work of persecuting the conscientious children of God.—Lord save us from a persecuting spirit, and from all those principles from which it springs!—For proofs that the work of persecution is from the influence of *Satan* on the human heart, according to ver. 10. *the Devil shall cast some of you into prison*, see LECTURE SECOND, § iii.

III. The *exhortation* given to this church, is contained in the following words: *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: be thou faithful unto death*; and they are moreover informed, that these sufferings are permitted to the end, *that they may be tried*, (ver. 10.) On which words I would observe, that no fault being charged upon this church, they are only exhorted not to be *intimidated* at the prospect of their sufferings; to continue faithfully *professing* his name, even unto death; and to consider their permitted trials as designed to *manifest* the power of divine grace in them. 1. To *fear*, is to be faint-hearted, and shrink back dismayed at the apprehension of threatening evil. But though the Christians of Smyrna were exposed to the *fury* of persecuting adversaries, they had no cause of dismay, since the FIRST and the LAST, even the ALMIGHTY, was their support; and since HE, who *was dead and is alive*, had sanctified the way of suffering to them, and opened the gates of eternal life. In like manner, if we have the Lord for our helper, we need not *fear* what man can do unto us; for he hath said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” And if at any time, the fear of man, through the weakness of our faith and love, should be ready to get the better of us, let us call upon the Lord for the *supply* of his grace, and the *support* of his Spirit, and he will make perfect his *strength* in our weakness.

2. They are called to continue to bear a faithful *testimony* to their Saviour's honour, embracing every opportunity of promoting his cause and interest in the world, by letting their light shine before men, and reproving, with meekness of wisdom, the abominable and abounding excesses of their heathen neighbours, who gave themselves up “to work all uncleanness with greediness.” And this faithful testimony was to be borne by them, even *till death* put a period to their existence below. On account of this faithful testimony borne to the truth by the primitive Christians, they were called MARTYRS, or *Witnesses*, that is, for Jesus, who sealed their testimony to his name and doctrine, with their blood. They were also called CONFESSORS,

by which was originally meant one who, "in the face of death, and at the expence of honour, fortune, and all the other advantages of the world, had *confessed* with fortitude, before the Roman tribunals, their firm attachment to the religion of Jesus."—(MOSHEIM.) *Martyr* and *Confessor*, in ecclesiastical history, are often used as synonymous terms; but sometimes by the *former* appellation is meant one who is put to *death* for being a Christian; and by the *latter*, one who had *honoured* Christ by his testimony.—There is still need for every lover of the Lord to bear his *testimony* to the truth; and should danger or death stare us in the face, we are bound to *continue* to let our light shine, and our voice be heard, that, as long as we live, we may do something to help forward the cause of truth. Ye, who believe in Christ, "are the salt of the earth," yea, "the light of the world," therefore, "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

3. Their sufferings were permitted in order to *try* them, that is, to make *manifest* the nature of the grace that was in them by means of trial for the discovery thereof. That this is the *sense* of the passage appears from the *ideality* of the original word, and the parallel passage in 1 Peter iv. 12. The word *πειράζω* (*peirazo*) is from *πειρᾶ*, (*peiro*) to pierce through, as with a spear, &c.; by means of which, piercing *trial* is made of any thing, and what is within, is *discovered* or manifested. In the passage in *Peter*, the sufferings of the saints is called "the fiery trial" which they endured for the sake of Christ; and it is spoken of as making *manifest* "the spirit of glory and of God," which rested upon them, for it is added, "on their part, (by your persecutors,) he (the Lord Christ) is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified." In this sense the passage is understood by DODDRIDGE, WESLEY, and SCOTT, as will appear from the following quotations "The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you, which will support you under it, (the trial,) and spread a lustre around you."—"While they (your enemies) are blaspheming Christ, you glorify him in the midst of your sufferings."—"Thus the glory of God was seen in their conduct and disposition." Their troubles *pierced* them, but to make *manifest* to others the grace that was within. The fire burnt but to *discover* the strength of their faith, and the fervour of their love. In like manner, the enemies of the church of Smyrna meant to destroy them by their fierce persecution; but the Lord, in permitting them to assail his faithful followers for a season, designed by means of these tribulations to make manifest their graces, and promote the interests of his kingdom. The graces of Christians never shine so bright

bright as when glowing in the fire of persecution ; and the kingdom of the Redeemer is never more effectually promoted than by the meekness and fortitude of his dying followers. (See LECT. SECOND, § ii. 3.) —The Lord grant that his professing people, in this our day, may be “so rooted and grounded in love,” that all the oppositions, insults, injuries, &c. that they are called to sustain, may but tend to make it manifest that they are “the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom (they) shine as lights in the world.”

IV. The *inducements* held out to this church are—deliverance from the *second death*—and the enjoyment of a *crown of life*.

1. *He that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the SECOND death, (ver. 11.)* All, in general, even saints as well as sinners, must submit to the stroke of *that death*, which consists in the separation of the soul from the body ; but those who conquer in this spiritual warfare, by retaining the meekness of Christ, and boldly confessing his name to the last, though they should lose their natural life in the struggle, are victorious in the spiritual warfare, and as such *shall not be hurt of the SECOND death*, which consists in the painful separation of the sinner from the enjoyment of God and happiness, in the paradise of glory that Christ has prepared for those who love his appearance. This is the *negative* part of the salvation of conquering believers, and a desirable part it is, since they who attain to it, shall suffer no more for ever ; for “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away.” Who but would be willing to suffer with Christ here, so that they may be counted worthy to escape the pangs of the second death, even the everlasting dying pains of a wretched spirit, deprived of God’s favourable regard, and devoid of his image ; of a wretched spirit, tormented by fierce lusts, and an accusing conscience, plunged in a fiery lake, without one ray of hope : of a wretched spirit, cast off by God, and surrounded by hateful and malicious fiends, whose sole delight is to inflict pain, and mock at misery. From this tremendous death, and the path of wickedness, carnality, and apostacy, that leads to it, save us—O save us, thou Spirit of holiness.

2. *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* This describes the *positive* part of their happiness, which is said to consist in having a *crown of life* conferred upon them as the reward of faithful continuance in the profession of his name, though it sub-
jected

jected them to untimely death. The particular quality of this promised reward, must be gathered from the use made of *honorary* crowns by the ancients; and from the different *epithets* affixed to the promised crown, as the reward of the saints, in the Scriptures. The *Roman* crowns of honourable reward (with which the Christians at Smyrna must have been well acquainted), always expressed, by means of the materials they were made of, or the figure into which they were wrought, the virtue rewarded in the person crowned. An instance or two will make this plain. The *civic* crown was made of the branch of a green oak, and given to him who had saved the life of a citizen. The crown called *vallis*, was a circle of gold raised with jewels; this was the reward of him who first forced the enemy's entrenchments. The *mural* crown was a circle of gold indented and embattled: this was given to him who first mounted the wall of a besieged place, and there lodged a standard. (See PANTOLOGIA, art. *Crown*, and plate 50, which represents eight different kinds of crowns.) In allusion to these crowns, expressive of the particular virtue rewarded in the wearer, the Scriptures speak of a crown of *righteousness*, (2 Tim. iv. 8.) of *glory*, (1 Peter v. 4.) and of *life*, (James i. 12.) which, in the *restricted* sense of these respective phrases, would signify the reward of RIGHTEOUSNESS, *meekness* for GLORY; *worthy* of eternal LIFE. However, these phrases may be taken in a more *general* sense, to signify the honour and happiness of the heavenly state. But I have no doubt of the propriety of keeping to the *restricted* sense of the epithet *life* in the text, and venture to assert, that the *crown of life* that the faithful martyrs of Jesus shall receive at his hands, in that day when he "will render to every man according to his deeds," "and every man shall receive his own reward," will be a crown of peculiar honorary distinction, which announces those who wear it, *entitled* to eternal *life*, as the proper adjudged reward of being enabled by divine grace to die for the name of Christ. Should we die for our country, its citizens may praise us, build monuments to our honour, and hand down our name to succeeding generations: but if we have it granted us to die for the cause of Christ, and in his spirit, He can and will reward us with substantial honour, and *eternal life*. And we, rejoicing before him in his kingdom, shall join the victors in his cause, who sing, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

PART II.

IMPROVEMENT AND APPLICATION OF THE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURE OF THE CHURCH OF SMYRNA;

OR,

A DISCOURSE ON PERSECUTED PIETY.

REVELATION ii. 9, 10.

I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich,) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days, &c.

INTRODUCTION.

THAT the characteristic feature of this church is *persecuted piety*, appears from the following considerations: No charge whatever, of immorality, decay of zeal, or inattention to church-discipline, is once brought against them; but, on the contrary, a noble testimony is borne to their devotedness to the Lord, and the sufferings they endured for his name's sake. They are moreover informed, that their struggle with wicked men, under Satanic influence, would continue a season longer, but that he would reward his followers who should remain faithful unto death, with durable riches, real glory, and eternal happiness, even the *crown of LIFE*, which he will bestow on all that overcome.

What this church had to endure from the wicked, was also the lot of other churches to suffer. The church of *Pergamos* had already "resisted (even) unto blood;" and *Antipas*, the *faithful martyr* of Christ, was slain among them, where Satan dwelt, (ver. 13.) And the churches
of

of Christ, in other parts, and at various times, have had to drink of the same cup ; therefore, after the exhortation given to this church to be faithful unto death, in the prospect of receiving the crown of life, is added, (as of general concern to all Christians in every nation and age,) *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

In considering the subject of Persecuted Piety, I shall call your attention to the following particulars.

- I. The visible *fruits* of primitive Christianity.
- II. The *treatment* the saints of God suffered from the world.
- III. Lay open the *sources* of the enmity manifested by persecutors against the children of light.
- IV. Give a general view of the doctrine of *toleration*.
- V. Make some practical *inferences*.

I. By the *fruits* of primitive Christianity is meant the *outward* expression and manifestation of a principle of regenerating grace within, by means of which our religion is demonstrated to be real, God is glorified, and mankind are taught the things that make for their peace. To enter at large upon a description of the virtuous fruits of a Christian experience, would lead me far beyond my design, or the limits of this discourse ; but it surely becomes us to stop a moment or two, and contemplate what God has wrought, as it respects the *morality*, *benevolence*, and *spirituality* of his faithful people ; and in doing this, I shall illustrate my subject by quotations from the history of the church during the three first centuries after the resurrection of Christ. This will shew that the religion of the Bible was happily exemplified by the lives of its early professors,—teach us what we are to consider as the fruits of faith in our day,—and lead us to examine ourselves as to our own experience of the power of godliness. To save room, and at the same time afford those who choose it, an opportunity of examining my authority, I observe once for all, that the pages referred to, are always, (except where it is signified otherwise,) the page of vol. i. of MILNER's valuable *History of the Church of Christ*, edit. 1810. I have chiefly confined my illustrations to quotations from this work, both as it affords, in general, ample materials, and will save those the trouble and expence of many books, who choose to refer to my quotations. At the same time, I beg leave to remark, that I have been at considerable pains to select appropriate passages, and have so disposed of them as at one view to throw such light upon the particular heads of these Lectures, as to have performed a work that, I trust, will not be

be unacceptable even to those who are possessed of, and are acquainted with, Dr. *Milner's* work.

1. I shall satisfy myself with two quotations relative to the MORALITY of the primitive Christians, A. D. 106.—PLINY, (well known as a classical author,) the governor of *Bithynia*, in his official address to TRAJAN, the Roman emperor, whom he served in the bad business of persecuting the people of the Lord, gives the following account, as the credited testimony of certain Christians who had apostatized to save their lives. Some Christians, “ named by an informer, first affirmed, and then denied, the charge of Christianity ; declaring that they had been Christians, but had ceased to be so, some three years ago, others still longer ; some even twenty years ago. All of them worshipped your image, and the statues of the gods, and also execrated Christ. None of which things, (as he had before observed,) a real Christian could be compelled to do. And this was the account which they gave of the nature of the religion they once professed, whether it deserves the name of crime or error ; namely, that they were accustomed on a stated day to meet before day-light, and to repeat among themselves a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and to bind themselves by an oath, with an obligation of not committing any wickedness, but, on the contrary, of abstaining from thefts, robberies, and adulteries ; also, of not violating their promise, or denying a pledge : after which, it was their custom to separate, and to meet again at a promiscuous harmless meal ; from which last practice, they however desisted, after the publication of my edict, in which, agreeably to your orders, I forbade any societies of that sort. On which account, I judged it the more necessary to enquire, BY TORTURE, from two females who were said to be deaconesses, (that is, pious women whose particular business it was to assist in the entertainment and care of the itinerant preachers, visit the sick and imprisoned, instruct female catechumens, and assist at their baptism,)—(BUCK'S *Theo. Dict.*)—what is the real truth. But nothing could I collect, except a depraved and excessive superstition.”—(MILNER, p. 147.) The reader is requested to keep this quotation in mind, as it will be necessary to refer to it more than once in the course of this Lecture : All that I would say concerning it in this place is, that PLINY was convinced the Christians were harmless and moral, and his calling their spirituality *superstition*, only proves that “ the natural man, (however learned and refined he may be,) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Farther on in the same century, BARDASANES, a Christian writer

writer of great parts, has left us a remarkable passage which shews at once the great progress, and the powerful energy of Christianity. "In Parthia," says he, "polygamy is allowed and practised; but the Christians of Parthia practise it not. In Persia, the same may be said with respect to incest. In Bactria, and in Gaul, the rights of matrimony are defiled with impunity. The Christians there act not thus. In truth, wherever THEY reside, they triumph in their practice over the worst of laws, and the worst of customs," (p. 253.) Thus the primitive Christians understood, and were brought under the influence of that command, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you," &c. And so must we dissent from the conduct of the wicked and the worldly, as we hope to be accepted of God. Christ's church are a people *called out* from the world; *separated* to the Lord; See General Observations, CHURCH, at the end of Lectures on the Church of *Ephesus*.

2. Under the head of the BENEVOLENCE of the primitive Christians, I shall speak of their *charity* in general, and of their tender love manifested towards each other, when suffering persecution for Christ's sake. Their *charity*, as it respected the aid they afforded their poor brethren, and mankind in general, was great indeed: here they walked in the footsteps of the blessed Jesus, whose delight it was to do good to mankind; for they also, as they had opportunity, did good unto all men, especially unto them who were of the household of faith, (Gal. vi. 10) That spirit that led the Christians at Jerusalem to have all things common; that caused them to sell their possessions and goods, and part them to all, as every man had need, (Acts ii. 45.) continued in the church under proper restrictions. As low down as A. D. 106, we find it was the common practice of the Christians of the province of Bithynia, "to meet at a promiscuous harmless meal."---(PLINY.) However, as this was offensive to the governor, they evidenced their desire to please him in all things that did not essentially injure the worship of God, by desisting from this practice, and supplied the wants of their poor brethren, in another way. TERTULLIAN, in his apology for, or defence of the Christians of his day, describes their charity in the following words. "Every one pays something into the public chest once a month, or when he pleases, and, according to his ability and inclination; for there is no compulsion. These gifts are, as it were, the deposits of piety. Hence we relieve and bury the needy; support orphans and decrepid persons; those who have suffered shipwreck; and those who, for the word of God, are condemned to the mines, or imprisonment. This very charity

city of ours has caused us to be noticed by some; 'See (they say) how these Christians love one another,'" (p. 285.) The liberality of the Christians, (says MILNER,) was wonderful. There was nothing like it at that time in the world. The Jews were a selfish, hard-hearted people. The Gentiles lived in luxury and splendour, if they could; but care for the poor seems to have made no part of their jurisprudence, nor to have been at all a fashionable virtue. I could never learn that philosophers, though they harangued incessantly concerning virtue, either much recommended, or practised any kindness to the bulk of mankind—that is, the slaves and the vulgar. Indeed their precepts are particularly directed to the higher ranks, and they seem to have forgot that the lower orders belonged to the human species. An hospital, an almshouse, or any similar provision for the poor, was unknown in the pagan and philosophic world. But, when the religion of HIM who is no respecter of persons, began to gain ground, the barbarous spirit of aristocracy lost its dominion among Christians, though it still prevailed in the manners of the rest of mankind. Christians felt themselves ALL sinners: ALL in the sight of God on a level. Thus the Christian master, though bound to preserve a due subordination of ranks, and whatever is wholesome in government, considered his slave as his equal in the sight of God, and as redeemed by the atoning blood of his Saviour. The pride of birth, station, and quality, was crushed. The obedient disciple of Christ followed the example of his compassionate Lord, and made it his business to relieve the miserable. About A. D. 250, the Christian church in the city of Rome, liberally maintained above one thousand five hundred widows and impotent persons, (p. 373.) The very spirit and taste of Christians, with the frugality and simplicity of their lives and manners, enabled them abundantly to help the necessitous; while the rest of the world persecuted them, and while philosophers themselves, dependent on the great, and despising the poor, vainly babbled against them. After this review of their benevolence, MILNER exclaims, "O God of all grace, whose tender mercies are over all thy works—THIS must be thy religion, which humbled and sweetened the hearts of men; which taught them practically to regard all men as brethren, and to delight in doing good to all without distinction of persons!" (p. 519, 520.) Paganism retains the same unfeeling disposition to this day, as appears from DR. BUCHANAN'S *Christian Researches in Asia*. The following extract shall suffice; it is dated from *Juggernaut*, in the East Indies, 21st June, 1806. "The idolatrous procession continued for some days longer, but my spirits are so exhausted by the constant view of these enormities, that

I mean to hasten away from this place sooner than I first intended. I beheld another distressing scene this morning at the place of Skulls: a poor woman lying dead, and her two children by her, looking at the dogs and vultures which are near, (wanting to destroy the bodies of the dead which are left unburied for them to prey upon.) The people passed by without noticing the children. I asked them where was their home. They said they had no home but where their mother was! O, there is no pity in Juggernaut! no mercy, no tenderness of heart in Moloch's kingdom!" As Paganism continues the same selfish unfeeling thing it was of old, so Christianity retains the same spirit of tender feeling, and active benevolence, as is manifest from the *Alms-Houses, Hospitals, Dispensaries*, asylums for the *Blind, Lunatics, Orphans, &c.*; *Benevolent and Stranger's Friend Societies*; *Sunday-school Societies*; *Tract and Bible Societies, &c.* which all adorn the Christian name, and appear as golden fruit upon the "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord."—God grant that all who read these pages, may become *fruit-bearing trees*; for, planted by the rivers of water, and deriving constant supplies from the fountain of purity and power, may the Lord himself cause all you do to prosper, (Psal. i. 3.) to the honour of his name, and the good of mankind. And ye who reap the benefit of any of these useful institutions, remember whose religion it is that writes the law of kindness on the hearts of his followers; praise the Lord for the good you receive at the hands of his servants, and look to the fountain of love for the richer communications of his grace.

The *love* of believers to one another in times of tribulation, was stronger than death, not all the floods of persecution could drown it, (Cant. viii. 6, 7.) They understood the command that Jesus had given them to love one another, as he had loved them, (John xv. 12.) to signify, as he intimates in the following verse, that they should be ready, if need required it, to lay down their lives for each other; and this duty was as cheerfully performed, as it was clearly understood, by the primitive Christians. Were any of the brethren cast into prison, for the sake of their religion; a select number of those who remained at large, would visit them there, and minister to their wants, though by so doing, they exposed themselves to every insult, and run great hazard of sharing the same fate. And this their love shall not be forgotten; but the King will say to them at the last day, "I was in prison, and ye came unto me." Were any of the followers of the Lamb condemned to be thrown to the wild beasts; to be burnt at the stake, &c. the brethren and sisters ever animated them by their presence,—often added their exhortations,—and sometimes even found opportunity to afford

afford them the kindness of their aid; glorying in seeing their heroic conduct, and ready to suffer in like manner, if it should please the Lord to call them to the conflict. Instances of this heroic love are numerous in ecclesiastical history. Should persecution rage again, the Lord, I trust, would also pour out the Spirit from on high, and we should again have Christians distinguished by their love to each other; for times of persecution have a tendency to sift our churches, and to revive the flame of brotherly love.

3. The SPIRITUALITY of the Christians may be gathered from what has been said concerning their *morality* and *benevolence*; for had they not been spiritual in their affections, they would not have excelled in these virtues: however, I shall give a quotation or two referring to this point. IGNATIUS, when before TRAJAN, professed to carry Christ in his heart, and to hope for the kingdom of the only-begotten Son of God, as his portion, (*See Martyrdom of Ignatius.*) ATHENAGORAS, who wrote towards the end of the second century, describes the Christians as "men that made small account of the present life, but were intent only upon contemplating God, and knowing his Word, (the Lord Jesus,) who is from him," (p. 254.) TERTULLIAN, in his Apology, says of himself and his brethren in the faith, "We are dead to all ideas of honour and dignity. Nothing is more foreign to us than political concerns. The whole world is our republic. We are a body united in one bond of religion, discipline, and hope. We meet in our assemblies for prayer. We are compelled to have recourse to the divine oracles for caution and recollection on all occasions. We nourish our faith by the word of God; we erect our hope, we fix our confidence, we strengthen our discipline, by repeatedly inculcating precepts, exhortations, corrections, &c. by excommunication, when it is needful," (p. 284.) And TUTIAN says, "All our virgins are sober and modest, and use to discourse of divine things, even sitting at their distaffs," (*MILLAR's Propagation of Christianity*, vol. i.) Thus believers of old had the love of God in their hearts; and their treasure was in heaven; they esteemed not the honours of the world, nor the pleasures of sense; their daily converse was with, and concerning the Saviour, whom they longed to make known to all men; and for the love they had to him, and the delight they felt in him, they could suffer and die for him, but could not cease to recommend his salvation. What true religion was, that it still is, and ever will be: believers though in the world are not of it, but of heaven. Christ is formed in his people the hope of glory. They live a life of faith in the Son of God, and out of the good treasury of their regenerated minds, they bring forth that which is good

to

to the edification of mankind. Reader! is this thy picture? If not, pray that it may be: if it be, bless God for his mercy, and beg of him to keep you by his mighty power.

II. I call you in the *second* place to take a view of the *treatment* these amiable characters received from a wicked world. Greatly as the heathen philosophers commended virtue, they did not know it when it appeared; therefore, as the Jews had persecuted the Master, so were the disciples "hated of all men for *his* name's sake." The *Acts of the Apostles* shews the treatment that Christians suffered from unbelievers, as low down as A. D. 63. I shall shew by a few quotations as before, that the same spirit continued in the world, and subjected believers to the same fight of affliction. They were *slandered*, and *injuriously treated*, but the *truth prevailed* in spite of opposition.

1. The Christians were *SLANDERED* as being *atheists*, *disaffected* to government, *enemies* to mankind, and guilty of *unnatural crimes*.

Atheism was the common charge against the Christians, because they would not worship the heathen idols. A. D. 90, the emperor *Domitian* put to death many persons accused of atheism, (p. 101.) A. D. 140, *Justin Martyr*, in his *Apology*, tells the emperor "in *WHAT SENSE* Christians were atheists. They did not worship the gods commonly so called; but they worshipped and adored the true God, and his Son, and the prophetic Spirit; honouring them in word and in truth," (p. 199.) A. D. 260, *Cyprian*, bishop of Carthage, was sentenced to die by the proconsul, in the following words: "Let *Thascius Cyprian*, who refuses to sacrifice to the gods, be put to death by the sword," (p. 454.) There are in this day those who condemn all as destitute of religion, who do not see with their eyes, and bow down at their shrine.—They were represented as *disaffected to government*, because they could not in conscience pay to their rulers idolatrous homage. A. D. 106, *Pliny* sentenced all who came before him, suspected of being Christians, to be executed, unless they would execrate Christ, and repeat after him an invocation of the gods, and the image of *Trajan* the emperor; "for of this (says he,) I had no doubt, whatever was the nature of their religion, that a sullen and obstinate inflexibility called for the vengeance of the magistrate," (p. 146.) A. D. 202, twelve persons were brought before the proconsul at *Carthage*, and, refusing to swear by the genius of the emperor, were sentenced to death in the following words: "*Seperatus* and the rest having acknowledged themselves Christians, and having refused to pay due honour to the emperor, I command their heads to be cut off," (p. 304.) If princes will make laws

laws that are opposed to the laws of the King of kings, they lay their best subjects, even all that fear God, under the painful necessity of refusing their compliance.—They were accused of being the common enemies of mankind. A. D. 64, Nero having barbarously diverted himself with causing Rome to be set on fire, in order to avoid the infamy of being the author of this calamity, laid the blame on the Christians, and gratified his savage disposition by persecuting them. Great numbers of Christians suffered under this persecution; and, according to Tacitus, “they were condemned not so much for the burning of Rome, as for being enemies of mankind.” “A very remarkable accusation! (says MILNER, p. 98.) It may be explained as follows: True Christians, though the genuine friends of all their fellow-creatures, cannot allow men who are *not* true Christians, to be in the favour of God. Their very earnestness in calling on their neighbours to repent, and believe the gospel, proves to those neighbours in what a dangerous state they are then apprehended to be. All who are not moved by the admonition of Christian charity to flee from the wrath to come, will naturally be disgusted, and thus the purest benevolence will be constructed into the most merciless bigotry; and the same cause produces similar effects to this day.”—They were malevolently accused as being guilty of *unnatural crimes*. A. D. 140, Justin, in a dialogue he published, notices the common calumnies against Christians; of their eating men; extinguishing the lights, and promiscuous sensuality; but treats these charges as not credited by men of sense and candour among their enemies, and therefore as not meriting a serious confutation, (p. 191.) But these malevolent accusations were not always treated as things of a ludicrous nature, but were sometimes taken up as serious charges, of which there need no doubt be entertained concerning the truth. About A. D. 177, the servants of Jesus of the city of Lyons in France, suffered from the persecuting rage of Marcus Antoninus; and in the paroxysm of the persecution, every injurious report concerning them met with credit. The following extract from the epistle of this church, respecting their sufferings, will shew what credit calumny will sometimes meet with. “There were seized at the same time some of our heathen servants, (for the governor had ordered us all to be sought for,) who, by the impulse of Satan, fearing the torments which they saw inflicted on the saints, at the suggestion of the soldiers, accused us of *eating human flesh*, and of various *unnatural crimes*, and of things *not fit* to be mentioned or imagined, and such as ought not to be believed of mankind. These things being divulged, all were incensed, even to madness, against us; so that if
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some were formerly more moderate on account of any connections of blood, affinity, or friendship, they were then transported beyond all bounds with indignation. Now it was that our Lord's word was fulfilled, *The time will come, when whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God service,*" (p. 226.) And who can be sure that such reports as these will never more be credited? Certain it is that such like slanders are the jokes of the wicked concerning the social meetings of the pious even to this day. Lord prepare thy people for every raging storm!

2. It will afford no astonishment to be informed, that the Christians being thus defamed by the tongue of malevolent slander, should be INJURIOUSLY TREATED both by lawless mobs, and the civil magistracy. In addition to the persecutions recorded in the *Acts of the Apostles*, and the martyrdom of *Antipas*, mentioned Rev. ii. 13., ecclesiastical history, and the Martyrologies, (to which I must beg leave to refer my readers,) abound with accounts of Christians being plundered, abused, and cast into prison; put to the torture; thrown to the wild beasts; beheaded; burnt to death, &c. &c. *Nero*, in his persecution, A. D. 64, caused the Christians to be either covered with the skins of wild beasts, and torn in pieces by devouring dogs; or fastened to crosses, and wrapped up in combustible garments, that, when day-light failed, they might, like torches, serve to dispel the darkness of the night; while the cries of women burning to death, supplied music for his ears. These cruelties, though *sharp*, were but of *short* duration, as death soon released the sufferers; but in many other persecutions, the tyrants endeavoured to prolong their pains, in hopes of wearing out the patience of the saints, and make them willing to purchase their ease at the expence of a good conscience. About A. D. 306, *Dioclesian* ordered great numbers of Christians, having an eye put out, or a foot lamed or cut off, to be sent to work at the mines, where they endured a continuation of hardships. The reader will naturally be led by the relation of this barbarity, to think of the cruelties of later days, exercised upon the Protestants condemned to the *gallies*, and tortured by the *Inquisition*. Sure, a persecutor is a *fiend*, whether he be called a Pagan, a Papist, or Protestant.—I should have been glad to have inserted the account of the martyrdom of *Vivia Perpetua* of *Carthage*, had the limits of my paper allowed it; but as it does not, though this martyrdom tends to throw much light on the spirit of the times, (A. D. 202.) on the one hand, and on that of genuine Christianity on the other, I must content myself with making the following reflections: It appears from the interesting narrative re-
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ferred to, that neither sex, nor rank, nor delicacy of circumstance, (for she was a lady of *quality*, and a woman who suffered with her was *recently brought to bed*.) had any influence to procure a milder treatment for the accused, and that nothing could avail to save them from a cruel and shameful death, but their renouncing Christ, and worshipping idols. That no love of life, persuasion of friends, fear of suffering, or even tender affection for infant offspring, (*Perpetua* had two young children,) was able to shake the firmness of their faith. Yet there is no appearance of stoicism: they felt their sufferings, and used every lawful means to make them lighter. The deacons, though in danger of like treatment, heroically ministered to them to the last, &c. While the church in general suffered these fiery trials, it is not to be expected that the brethren in the *army* would be free; and indeed, the instances of the hardships pious soldiers had to undergo, are many; and the testimony borne to the meekness and bravery with which they suffered oppression and martyrdom, are pleasing testimonies to the power of divine grace.—May Christian soldiers, in promoting the cause of truth, still be enabled to manifest the *courage* and *fortitude* of the Hero, and the *meekness* of the Saint.

It is a lamentable truth, that the spirit of persecution did not die away with Paganism, but that professed Christians have stained the sword of the law with the blood of the saints. When St. John had this foreshewn to him in the visions of God, he “wondered with great admiration.” The church of Rome has made herself marvellous in this bad business, and caused Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, England, &c. to be watered from one end to the other with the blood of Protestants; while the fires that burned them have illuminated these countries. But still more marvellous! Protestants have persecuted Protestants; yea, those whose churches are built upon liberty of conscience claimed for themselves, have universally denied it to others, and ejected, fined, imprisoned, and slain their dissenting brethren. How great have been the sufferings of Nonconformists, Presbyterians, and Quakers, for conscience-sake. But we live in happy days: the *Toleration Act* has secured religious liberty to all who swear fealty to the prince, and profess their faith in the doctrine of the Trinity. (See *Extract of TOLERATION ACT*.) And our good king has always declared that his subjects should not be molested for conscience-sake; but, in spite of these things, the carnal mind retains the old enmity against the things and the people of God. Nothing shews this in a clearer light, than the persecutions carried on against the Methodists, by the members of the established church, for several years

after their first rise. (For an account of these persecutions, see *WESLEY'S Journals*; *J. NEILSON'S Journal*; and *Persecution at Wednesbury*.) It was not on account of their objecting to the Articles, or neglecting the ordinances of the Established Church, that they could be blamed; yet, mobs were encouraged, and paid by justices of the peace, and ministers of the gospel, to break into, and plunder the houses, destroy the goods, and abuse the persons of unoffending members of society. All this was done in defiance of law, only because the Methodists, saved from the carnal mind, had received the Spirit of Christ, and evidenced the inward work of grace upon their hearts, by exchanging indolence, intemperance, contention, &c. for industry, sobriety, chastity, peacefulness, benevolence, and diligent attention on all the means of grace, as administered in the Establishment. It was for these things they were defamed, excommunicated, and persecuted. But an appeal to the higher courts has ever been favourable to the oppressed; and none need fear that persecution will be countenanced by *Government*, while any of the present family remain to sway the British sceptre.

3. The religion of Jesus FLOURISHED in spite of opposition. It was the cause of God, and the united efforts of earth and hell could not overthrow it. As the bush remained unconsumed in the fire, and as the more the Egyptians oppressed the children of Israel, the more they multiplied and grew; (Exod. i. 12.) so the Lord preserved his church in spite of, yea, caused it to prosper by means of the persecution by which it was assailed. The members of the church at Jerusalem being scattered abroad by the persecuting rage of their enemies, who had stoned Stephen, "went every where preaching the word;" the Lord thus over-ruling the opposition of his enemies, and making it the means of carrying the gospel of truth into various and distant regions. The imprisonment of Paul and Silas was instrumental to the conversion of the jailor and his family at Philippi, (Acts xvi. 34.) Indeed the first Christians gained many proselytes by their patience and constancy in their sufferings. They entertained the fiercest threatenings with an unshaken mind: they died rejoicing, and triumphed in the midst of the greatest tortures. This continuing for some ages, convinced their enemies that they were supported by a divine supernatural power. LACTANTIUS (*of Righteousness*, book v. chap. 13, 14.) thus triumphs in the cause: "By reason of our wonderful courage our number is increased, many flocking to us from those that worship idols; for when they see men torn in pieces by variety of torments, and yet maintaining patience invincible,—able

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to tire out their tormentors, they begin to think, as they have ground to do, that the consent of so many, and the perseverance of such dying persons, cannot be in vain; and that patience itself, were it not from God, could not hold out under such racks and tortures. Thieves, and men of robust bodies, are not able to bear such tearing in pieces: they groan and cry out, being overcome with pain, because not endowed with patience inspired from heaven: But our very children and women, to say nothing of our men, do with silence conquer their tormentors. Let the Romans go and boast of their *Mutius* and *Regulus*, behold with us the weaker sex, and the most tender age, suffer their bodies to be torn and burnt. This is that virtue which the philosophers vainly boast of, but never really possessed."—By the force of such arguments, JUSTIN MARTYR confesses he was brought over from being a Platonic philosopher, to become a Christian; for when he observed the Christians, whom he had often heard calumniated, not afraid of terrible deaths. "I thought within myself, (says he, *First Apology*, p. 50.) that it was not possible such persons could wallow in vice and luxury, it being the interest of vicious people to shun death; to dissemble with the magistrates, and to do every thing to save their lives." TERTULLIAN tells *Scapula*, in the conclusion of his address to him, "It is to no purpose to think that this sect will fail, which you see is the more built up, the faster it is cut down; for who can behold such eminent patience, and not have some scruple in his own mind, and begin to enquire into the cause of it, and when once he knows the truth, will not immediately follow it."—(*Vide MILLAR's Propagation of Christianity*, vol. i. p. 465, &c.) Without entering into the enumeration of particulars, I would just observe, that the persecuted sects of late times, have ever prospered by the means taken for their destruction.

III. In the *third* place, I proceed to lay open the *sources* of the enmity manifested by persecutors against the children of light. That such innocent, holy, and benevolent characters as the first Christians were, should be so injuriously treated in the world, is matter of astonishment; especially when we behold the worshippers of different idols tolerating each other. Why then not tolerate the Christians? The reason is plain: they would not tolerate them because they *were Christians*. Idolaters of every description were all of one cast, being only different branches of the same family, and mutual supporters of the interest of the kingdom of darkness. But Christianity was a heavenly religion; the *light* of heaven shining into the *darkness* of hellish

fight, which would not give way to it without a dreadful struggle to maintain its influence over the children of men. While "the strong man armed, kept his palace, (undisturbed by *truth*,) his goods (subjects) were in peace;" in peace with one another's vain idolatry: for he held them all fast in chains of ignorance and sensuality; but when the Lord Jesus, "the stronger than he, came upon him," to take from Him his armour of darkness, and set free the deluded slaves of sin, he stirred up his servants to fight, if peradventure they might by any means prevent its overthrow; and "they all united against the religion from heaven, for they hated its purity, its humility, its spiritual worship, its renunciation of self-glory, and its contemplation of eternal life."—(BUCHANAN'S *Eras of Light*; p. 9.) That these opposers of Christianity acted under the influence of Satan, both the testimony of the primitive churches, and the word of God, join to attest. In the epistle of the church of *Lyons*, we have the following words: Our brethren servants, "by the impulse of *Satan*, fearing the torments which they saw inflicted on the saints, accused us of unnatural crimes," (p. 226.) Again, "The holy martyrs now sustained tortures which exceed the powers of description: *Satan* labouring, by means of these tortures, to extort something slanderous against Christianity," (p. 227.) And the Lord Jesus speaks of *Pergamos*, as *Satan's* seat; and of *Antipas*, as his faithful martyr, who was slain among the saints at *Pergamos*, where *Satan* dwelt, (Rev. ii. 13.) And it is expressly said to the faithful of *Smyrna*, "Behold the *Devil* shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried," &c. (ver. 10.) But as *Satan* cannot act in his own person; he engages his servants to espouse his cause, and leads them on to fight his battles against the truth, having them entirely at command by reason of their *pride*, *avarice*, *licentiousness*, and *cruelty*, of which he knows how to avail himself, and turn their energy against the saints. Pride, avarice, licentiousness, and cruelty, are therefore to be considered as the evil principles that dispose men to serve Satan in the work of persecution. It is a curious fact, that the proud are as cruel as the licentious, and that among the persecutors of the saints have ever been found the abandoned *profligate*; and precise *moralist*; nor is the reason of this obscure, since evangelical piety is equally opposite to the immorality of the one, and the self-complacency of the other.

1. Under the head of PRIDE, as it leads men to acts of persecution, I shall consider the pride of *power*, *learning*, and *self-righteousness*, and prove from historical facts that all of them are ready for the work.

—The powerful often persecute from the pride of station. The civil magis-

magistrate, forgetting that his office is designed for the temporal good of the people, and not for the regulation of their religious sentiments and worship, has often interfered between God and conscience, imposing doctrines and practices that the people could not receive as of divine original, which nevertheless he has proceeded to enforce by the sword of power, which was put into his hands by the King of kings for a quite different purpose. And sure it is, that, intoxicated by power and flattery, the magistrate may become capable of commanding what no person, that fears God, dares to perform. The Roman emperors had the vanity to arrogate to themselves divine honours; inflicting death upon those who refused to comply. Thus the governor says to POLYCARP, bishop of *Smyrna*, "What harm is it to say, Lord Caesar! and to sacrifice, and be safe?" To whom *Poly-carp* answered, "I will not follow your advice;" and was burned alive for refusing, (p. 215.) Even to this day men in power are fond of dictating to their inferiors, &c. *what they shall believe, with whom and how they shall worship* Almighty God; and it is too common with them to punish such as do not comply with their humour.

Men of science, through the pride of *learning*, are apt to think that they understand all things, and demand as much respect to be paid to their judgment, as men of office do to their influence. Dissent from the opinion of one of these sons of science, and he considers you as insulting his understanding. It is hard for one philosopher to bear the contradiction of another, whose parts he considers as equal with his own; but for illiterate men to contradict them, is too much to be endured. This provoked the displeasure of the philosophers of old: the Christians were, in general, destitute of a classical education, yet they dared to dispute the assertions of the learned, and to accuse them of being ignorant of God, and *radically* wrong in their religious notions and practices. If they would but have accommodated matters, and, after offering some trifling objections, allowed idolatry to be right in the *main*, they might even have paid a sort of religious respect to Jesus, their Master, and have been tolerated. *EMILION* addressed *DIONYSIUS* in the following words: "What can be the meaning why ye may not adore that God of yours, on supposition that he is a god, in conjunction with our gods?" *Dionysius* answered, "We worship no other God," (p. 475.) On this account, and because of the fault the Christians found with the morals of the heathen, not excepting their philosophers, they and their religion were the subjects of continual reproach. *Celsus*, the epicurean philosopher of the second century, insults the Christians in the following manner. Speaking of Christ, he

he says, "He persuaded only twelve abandoned sailors and publicans, and did not persuade even all these." And concerning the preachers of the gospel, he says, "We see these itinerants showing readily their tricks to the vulgar, but not approaching the assemblies of wise men; not daring to shew themselves *there*: but where they see boys, a crowd of slaves, and ignorant men, there they thrust in themselves, and puff off their doctrine," (p 529.) Thus the learned of the present day, if destitute of the grace of God, contemptuously treat all who differ from their decisions:—N. B. The writings of *Celsus* are valuable, as being the testimony of a bitter enemy, who lived near the time of Christ, to the truth of various historical facts, and to the doctrine, practice, &c. of the first Christians.

Self-righteousness also disposes men to persecute those whose views of religion are evangelical. It is probable that this was the true occasion of the wrath of Cain against his brother Abel. On account of this the Jews rejected the doctrine of the cross, persecuted the brethren, and were incensed at the thought of the Gentiles being taken into covenant with God. The heathen also were fond of thinking themselves either righteous, or at least able to make themselves so, without needing the help of regenerating grace. Hence the doctrine of the fall of man,—the atonement by Christ,—and the work of the Spirit on the human mind,—were highly offensive to them, as robbing them of all their glory. It is no wonder that self-righteous people considered the Christians as the *enemies of mankind*, (See ii. § 1. above,) and defamed and persecuted them as such; for they indeed were the grand and the only enemies of this their favourite principle. Two quotations from *Celsus*, as before mentioned, shall suffice to shew the light in which such characters viewed them. "Ye (says he,) encourage sinners, because ye are not able to persuade any really good men; therefore ye open the doors to the most wicked and abandoned." Again, he accuses them of saying, "An *unjust* man, if he humble himself for his crimes, God will receive him; but a *just* man, who has proceeded in a course of virtue from the beginning, if he look up to him, he will not be received." This is the language of such like characters in the present day; and it will ever be found that, since "they that be whole (in their own conceit,) need not a physician, but they that are (sensible that they are) sick;" all unconvinced persons, (who are universally self-sufficient,) will be offended with, and ready in some way or other to shew their resentment towards, those who would rob them of the righteousness in which they trust. It is also worthy of remark, that many who are called good kind of people,
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and even some professors of religion, who are declined in the fervour of their minds, feel greatly tried, and become embittered against those who go beyond their standard of benevolence or zeal.

2. **AVARICE** has often been instrumental in stirring up persecution against the saints. This base disposition of mind may be considered in two points of view, viz. the fear of *losing* what we are already possessed of, and the *coveting* what we see others enjoying. Fear of *losing* worldly possessions, or, more properly, missing of temporal gain, caused *Demetrius*, and his fellow craftsmen, to raise a tumult against *Paul* at Ephesus. And on this account, the masters of the girl who had been dispossessed by *Paul* of a *pythonic* spirit, (Acts xvi. 18.) accused him to the magistracy of being disaffected to the government, as the others had represented him an enemy to religion. But it was not *religion*, or the *government*, that these people cared for: the craft of one party was in danger, and the other had lost their hopes of gain; yet it would not have availed them to have laid open the *true* cause of their complaint: therefore, wise in their generation, they cry out the *Church*! the *State*! these men have formed desigus tending to ruin the church, and overturn the constitution:—men and brethren, help. These cries continued to proceed from Pagan priests, and the furnishers of the idol's temples, who, fattened at the altars of vile dæmons, worshipped by the deluded populace as gods; till at length, about thirty years after our Lord's ascension, the Roman emperors began to undertake the cause of declining idolatry; and the vile **NERO** headed the blood-hounds of persecution. **DOMITIAN** trod in his steps; and in A. D. 100, **TRAJAN**, aided by his faithful servant, the renowned **PLINY**, tried whether by the terror of persecution he could not drive back the enlightened, and therefore unwilling people, to the dark and abominable shrines of dæmon gods. *Pliny* expresses his hopes that this method, on the one hand, aided by the hopes of worldly gain, on the other, would be attended with success; yea, he says, he had found it successful in part already. From the information he gives his master of the success of these means in *Bithynia*, the province he governed, there can be no doubt but that the *Asiatic churches* had to endure their share of the horrors of these persecutions. That religious establishment which resorts to such methods of filling its places of worship, has little considered the true genius of religion, and less still do they copy after the example of Christ, who, as *Jortin* says, “never used any thing that looked like force or violence except once, and that was to drive bad men out of the temple, and not to drive them in,” (John ii, 15.)

Numerous

Numerous are the instances in which ~~costing~~ the property of others, has raised, and given spirit to, the persecution of the saints. About A. D. 250, a certain augur, (or fortune-teller,) stirred up a persecution against the brethren in the city of *Alexandria*, in which, after having abused certain of the saints, "they all rushed on the houses of the godly: every one ran to the house of his neighbour, spoiled and plundered it, and purloined the most valuable goods, and threw away those things which were vile and refuse, and burnt them in the roads; and thus was exhibited the appearance of a captive and spoiled city. The brethren fled, and withdrew themselves, and received with joy the spoiling of their goods, as those did to whom Paul beareth witness; and I do not know that any person who fell into their hands, except one, denied the Lord." (p. 391.) About the same time, one *Paul of Thebais*, a pious young man, aged 23, having a large fortune left him by his father, his brother-in-law coveted it, and was about to accuse him to the governor of being a Christian; of which Paul having notice, fled to the desert, where he lived a retired life for 67 years. He is the first Christian we read of who turned hermit, (p. 410.) MOSHEM (*Eccles. Hist.* vol. i. p. 78) says, it was chiefly the rich who were exposed to the dangers of the times, "after the confiscation of whose fortunes, a rapacious magistracy were perpetually gaping." Many of the later persecutions both in this and other nations owed their fury to the same cause: Instances are too many to enumerate; but the rich and the poor have equally been the slaves of this vice. I would have my readers well to consider, that those who seek the honours of the world, and the favour of great men, are in particular danger of being brought under the power of covetousness, and of being led by it to do things contrary to the dictates of conscience, and the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom; for these people must flatter their patrons, as they hope to secure the continuance of their favour, which appears essentially necessary to their advancement. But as it is by *deeds* as much as by words that the great must be complimented, should they on whom your hopes depend, require you to shew contempt of, or even carry yourselves injuriously towards an obnoxious individual or sect, it must be instantly done, or you renounce their friendship for ever. In such a case, how are you perplexed? Perhaps you are told the enjoyment of the good you desire is suspended on your conduct in this single instance. You fear to act as they would have you to do. You are loth to forego the expected enjoyment. You promise yourselves to transgress in this sort, no more again for ever. You comply with their command, and expect your reward,

reward. They smile upon you, and assure you they will exert themselves in your behalf, if you do but continue to shew yourself worthy of their friendship. You feel disappointed, but dare not complain of being deceived. Covetousness grows vehement in its desires. The conscience loses its tenderness, by having its dictates repeatedly violated: and by then the great man speaks out his mind at large, and points out the property of the defenceless sectarian, as the boon that is to remunerate your obsequiousness: you are ready to seize the prey. If you should not be amongst the foremost to spoil your neighbour, yet when you see others enriching themselves with their plunder, covetousness will not long suffer you to remain an inactive spectator.—The love of money must be destroyed out of our hearts, or it will lead us, should circumstances prove favourable, to make war upon the saints of the Most High.

3. LICENTIOUSNESS, as comprising *effeminacy* and *intemperance*, has done much in carrying on the work of persecution. An instance or two on each of these heads shall suffice. *Effeminacy* caused the heathen servants of the Christians of *Lyons*, falsely to accuse the brethren of unnatural crimes. They did it “by the impulse of Satan, at the suggestion of the soldiers, *fearing* the torments which they saw inflicted on the saints,” (p. 226.) Many had rather defile their consciences by *slandering* the pious, than by speaking the truth in their *defence*, expose themselves thereby to a portion of their sufferings, though undergone in the cause of religion, and for the honour of God.—What need have we to deny ourselves, and take up our daily cross, that we may learn to “endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.” For only by this means can we be secured from being offended when “persecution ariseth because of the word.”

Intemperance was universal among the Gentiles. Gluttony, drunkenness, and abominable impurity, were considered as essential parts of their religious worship; and no wonder, for “they *sacrificed* to devils, and not to God.” To affirm that people of this character would persecute those who dared to find fault with their conduct, however licentious, is so far from being merely problematical, that innumerable instances might be brought forwards to establish this fact. The following shall suffice: *JERIN*, who wrote his *Apology*, A. D. 170, observes, that “every where, if a Gentile were reprov'd by a father or relation, he would revenge himself by informing against the reprov'r, in consequence of which he was liable to be dragged before the governor, and put to death,” (p. 207.) Yea, if any refused to join with them in “the same excess of riot,” they were often exposed to the

the same fate. LIVY, who died A. D. 17, gives a true picture of the persecuting spirit of licentiousness, in his description of the flagitious rites of *Bacchus*, (the god of wine, drunkenness, &c.) at *Rome*, which he speaks of "as the most abominable that can be conceived; at which no acts of lewdness and brutality were deemed unlawful by either sex, and at which those persons were sacrificed, who shewed any reluctance to such vile nocturnal practices!" — (BURDER'S *Missionary Anecdotes*, p. 13.) And no wonder that profligacy should appear virtue, and that those who refused to join in shameful abominations should be persecuted, when the heathen philosophers recommended and practised those excesses themselves; yea, even the *divine* PLATO, (as he is usually called,) in his *Virtuous Republic*, proposes that a general license of whoredom shall be the reward of the brave warrior, and that when upon a military expedition, it should not be permitted to any one to refuse him.—(LELAND'S *Advantage*, &c. of the *Christian Revelation*, part ii. ch. 8. and see part i. ch. 7.)

What licentiousness *was*, it still *is*, and the profligate will still hate, slander, and persecute, (as far as they are permitted,) those who discountenance their irregular practices. Yea, if *you* do not get the carnal mind destroyed by grace, it will not only destroy your graces, but at length lead you to act injuriously towards those who seek to save your souls; for a lust attacked, never forgives: it must be slain, or as sure as it lives, it meditates revenge.—O, my readers! it is to be feared that some of you who now hear the gospel, and do many things gladly; like *Herod*, harbouring some lust, will be driven by it at length to act as he did, and turn and persecute your faithful reprove. (Mark vi. 20,—27.)

4. CRUELTY is almost sure to lead to acts of persecution. It is scarcely possible for us of this day and nation, who witness manners so much softened by the benign influence of the blessed gospel, even to form an idea of the ferocious spirit of the ancient heathen; who, as the genuine children of him who was a murderer from the beginning, rejoiced to hear cries and groans, and to behold mangled limbs, streaming blood, and dead bodies. In proof of this awful and degrading fact, I need only give you the outlines of their proceedings at their *wild-beast* exhibitions, and *gladiatory* shows. The *wild beasts* were brought into the area (*arena*) of the amphitheatre; where they fought with men, or each other, as was most agreeable to the taste of the assembly, which was composed of people of all ages, and both sexes, who were charmed with seeing them wound and destroy one another. It is computed that the amphitheatre of VESPASIAN at *Rome*, would hold

87,000

87,000 spectators, who might all be delighted at once with these horrid scenes. The *gladiatory* shows, in which men fought with, and destroyed each other for the entertainment of the public, "were exhibited at the funerals of great men, and on many other occasions, by the Roman consuls, knights, priests, and almost all that bore great offices in the state, as well as by the emperors; and in general, by all that had a mind to make an interest with the people, who were so savage as to be extravagantly fond of these shows. (They were exhibited sometimes in the theatres, and at other times in the public streets of the city.) And not only the men, but the women (also) ran eagerly after them, who were, by the prevalence of custom, so far divested of that compassion and softness which is natural to the sex, that they took a pleasure in seeing them kill one another, and only desired that they (who were related to them,) might fall genteelly, and in an agreeable attitude. Such was the profligacy of these shows, and so great the number of men that were killed on these occasions, that *Lepsius* says, no war caused such slaughter of mankind, as did these sports of pleasure, throughout the several provinces of the vast Roman empire; and yet they prevailed universally among the Romans, even when they were famous for the polite arts, and were thought to give a pattern of good government to other nations."—(LELAND on *Revelation*, part ii. chap. 4.) No wonder that the heathen, transformed into *demons*, by their familiarity with savage sports, should ever be forward to persecute the Christians, and be *entertained* with their cries and dying groans. But in this diabolical amusement they were frequently disappointed: grace supporting the people of God so wonderfully, that they were stronger to suffer, than their enemies to torture them.

Who can read such accounts without exclaiming, What a horrid place must hell be; where every barbarous temper, arrived at dreadful maturity, will act without controul, and the cries of tormentors, and the tormented, appal every ear! Who can conceive what is included in being banished from God, and tormented in "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!"—O Lord, "gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men."—Let us praise God for the blessed gospel, since its benign influence has not only filled many hearts with heavenly love, but has also so wonderfully softened the national character, wherever it is professed, that we are struck with astonishment and horror at the barbarity of heathen nations, amidst all their boasted refinement.—O Lord, "remove not our candlestick out of his place," but cause the "dew of heaven," to refresh

and soften our souls.—Let us refrain from all cruel diversions, such as boxing-matches, bull-baitings, cock-fights, horse-races, &c. as they tend to deface the law of kindness from the mind, and prepare us to do the devil's work in persecuting the saints. And let parents and masters see to it, that the children under their care never harden to cruelty and bloodshed by being permitted to divert themselves by torturing animals, and empaling insects.

IV. I proceed in the *fourth* place to lay before my readers a general view of the doctrine of religious *toleration*, extracted from LOCKE's *Four Letters on Toleration*. The reader will observe that, while I have greatly compressed LOCKE's arguments, I have chiefly endeavoured to retain his words, and always given his sense. The edition made use of, is the LONDON quarto edition of 1765. I shall lay the substance of this work before my readers under the following heads of division: 1. The conduct required of different churches towards each other. 2. The duty of the civil magistrate towards the church. 3. The folly of intolerance. 4. Duty of church members in case of persecution for conscience-sake.

1. MR. LOCKE says, I take a church to be a *voluntary* society of men joining themselves together in order to the public worshipping of God, in such a manner as they judge acceptable to him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls. No one is *born* a member of any church; but every one joins himself *voluntarily* to that society in which he believes he has found that profession and worship which is truly acceptable to God. The hopes of salvation, as it was the only cause of his *entrance* into that communion, so it can be the only reason of his *stay* there. Hence should he discover any thing wrong in the doctrine or worship of that church, it is as *free* for him to go out, as it was for him to enter, (38). Hence different churches should tolerate each other. No *private person* has any right, in any manner, to *prejudice* another person in his civil enjoyments, because he is of another church or religion, (40). And no church, though orthodox, has a right to *punish* another church for supposed heresies: for every church being orthodox, in its own opinion, the contest between them is, which has truth on its side; and as there is no judge upon earth, by whose sentence it can be determined, the decision of that question must be left to the Supreme Judge of all men, to whom alone belongs the punishment of the erroneous. Nay, if it could be manifest which of these two dissenting churches were in the right way, there would not accrue thereby unto the orthodox any right of destroying the other; for churches have neither any jurisdiction in worldly concerns, nor are

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fire and sword any proper instruments wherewith to convince and convert mankind. All churches convinced of these truths, have pleaded the cause of toleration when they were weak, and only persecute when court favour has given them the better end of the staff; (41, 42).

2. Of the duty of the *magistrate* respecting toleration.—It is the duty of the civil magistrate to defend the life, liberty, and property of the subject; but it is not, and cannot be, extended to the salvation of the souls of the people he governs. For, *first*, God never gave any such authority to one man over another, as to compel any one to his religion. Nor can any such power be vested in the magistrate by the *consent of the people*; because no man can so far abandon the care of his own salvation, as to leave it to the choice of another to *prescribe* to him what faith or worship he shall embrace. *Secondly*, His power consists only in outward *force*; but true and saving religion in the inward *persuasion* of the mind. *Thirdly*, He has no more chance of being right than other men have. And as the princes of different countries differ from each other in their religious opinions, the subjects of one prince only could be in the right, (36, 37.) The *mass* in France is as much supposed the truth, as the *liturgy* in England, (79).

The civil government can give no *new* right to the church, nor the church to the civil government. So that whether the magistrate join himself to any church, or separate from it, the church remains always as it was before—a *free* and *voluntary* society. It neither acquires the power of the *subrd* by the magistrate's coming to it, nor does it lose the right of *instruction* and *excommunication*, by his going from it, (41). The magistrate has no power either to *impose* by his laws the use of any rites and ceremonies in the church, contrary to, or besides what God has established by his word; or to *forbid* the use of such rites as are already practised by any church, (48—51.) But church-men (place-men) are ever to be found who will give their suffrages to the support of any point of doctrine or discipline that is pleasing to the prince. How these place-men acted under the vicissitudes of *orthodox* and *Arian* emperors, is well known; and also how easily in the reigns of *Henry VIII.*, *Edward VI.*, *Mary* and *Elizabeth*, they changed their decrees, articles of faith, forms of worship, &c. according to the inclination of those kings and queens. In these instances the ecclesiastics wickedly gave up their consciences to be ruled by the magistrate, (47). The magistrate has sometimes suffered persecutors to disturb the public peace, because they *flattered* their pride, and *fed* their covetousness, (64.)

Rulers need not fear that the members of any church that is *tolerated*,

ated, will raise factions against the state, as nothing but smarting under the rod of intolerance can tempt any Christian society to wish a change of government, (60, 61.) If a sect could be found that expressly teaches, that men are not obliged to *keep* their promises; that princes may be *dethroned* by those who differ from them in religion; or that the *dominion* of all things belong only to themselves—this sect should not be tolerated. None indeed speak these things plainly; but as there are those who say, *Faith is not to be kept with heretics—Kings excommunicated forfeit their crowns and kingdoms*—and that, *Dominion is founded in grace*, it becomes a serious enquiry how far such a sect should be tolerated, (59).

3. That an *intolerant* spirit is a great weakness and folly, and quite unsuitable to the genius of the gospel, appears from the following considerations.

Speculative opinions, and *articles of faith*, cannot be imposed on any church by the *law of the land*, as to believe this or that to be true does not depend upon our will, (55.) The Christian religion is designed for *all* nations; but men's views are *contracted*, and the magistrate of each country would have force used to make men worship God *his* way; but this would go to *destroy* the true worship of God in most countries. If it were fit to punish men for not being of the established religion in England, the rulers of Popish, Mahometan, or Pagan countries, having the same civil power, by exerting it against dissenters, would make war against the truth of God's worship. What is true and good in *England*, will be true and good at *Rome* too, in *China* or *Geneva*, (71, 86. 90.) Were a church *idolatrous*, it must be tolerated by the magistrate; for what power can be given him for the suppression of an idolatrous church, which may not, in time and place, be made use of against an orthodox one? The civil power can either change *every thing* in religion according to the prince's pleasure, or it can change *nothing*. During some hundreds of years when the *Jewish* and *Pagan* religions were more than tolerated by the civil power, Christianity was better *preserved*, more widely *propagated*, and rendered more *fruitful* in the lives of its professors, than it has been ever since it was established by law. Christianity has lost none of its first beauty, force, or reasonableness, by having been almost 2000 years in the world, but is still able to *shift for itself*, without the help of force, (52, 70.) The application of force and punishment has no *natural* tendency to enlighten the understanding, or produce belief; nay, it is more likely to make both the sufferers, and the spectators of the severities inflicted for conscience-sake, to think the *worse* of that religion

religion that inflicts them. Those *out of* the right way are more apt to apply force than those who are *in* it. Magistrates, and men of power, are as *liable* to error, prejudice, and passion, as other men. God has appointed other means than *force*, for the propagation of the truth, even the *preaching* of his gospel. Force is not used to cause men to give a *fair*, but an *obedient* hearing to the reasons of those who exercise it. It is often resorted to as the means of saving the *trouble* of teaching. If *ecclesiastics* will plead for the utility of force, let them employ it only to drive vile and scandalous traffickers for the things of this world *out of* their church, rather than to drive whosoever they can *into* it, (73, 75, 78, 83, 81, 84, 103.) If force is of such use as some men pretend, to make men *consider* the doctrines proposed to them, in order that, being saved from error, they may embrace the *truth* to the salvation of their souls; it is to be lamented that those who need the application of force the most, are *deprived* of this means of making them examine the doctrines and discipline of the church to which they belong. The multitude are ever found to be of the magistrate's opinion, and belong to the established church of the countries in which they happen to live; be those establishments whatever they may; and it is not to be expected that the civil ruler should lay penalties for matters of religion upon the members of his own church; so that the members of all establishments may *keep* their errors and corruptions, without any hopes of the application of this salutary remedy! But as fiery zealots are never known to persecute, torment, and destroy the abettors of their own party, let them be ever so ignorant and corrupt, it is evident that it is not out of *love* to the souls of their dissenting neighbours, that they act thus towards them, (83, 84, 90, 91, 92, 136, 33, 34.) Persecutors themselves do not like to allow the cause of their cruel treatment of dissenters to be on account of points of *conscience*; but dissemble, like Louis XIV. in his cruel persecution of the French Protestants, 1685, who, requiring all his subjects to come to mass, punished those with a witness who did not comply. For what? Not for their *religion*, say the pleaders for that discipline, but for *disobeying* the king's laws! (85.) The rulers of the Jewish commonwealth were indeed commanded to put to death, as traitors against God and the state, all that should be found guilty of idolatry *within* the limits of the land of *Canaan*, but this command did not extend to any of those regions, however subjected unto the Jews, that were situated *without* those bounds, nor were strangers sojourning within the land of *Canaan*, *compelled* by force to observe the rites of the *Mosaic* law. But Christ has instituted no Christian

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commonwealth, nor put the sword into any magistrate's hand, with commission to make use of it in *forcing* men to forsake their former religion, and receive his, (53—55.)

4. In the *last* place, I shall call the attention of *church-members* to a consideration of the part they should act, in case of *persecution* for conscience-sake. If a magistrate should enjoin any thing by his authority that appears *unlawful* to the conscience of a private person, such person must submit, as far as his conscience will allow him to do it, and then *undergo* the punishment inflicted on account of disobedience in such cases, which is not unlawful for him to *bear*, (57.) The reader will, I doubt not, be pleased with the following illustration of this doctrine, extracted from MILNER's works, vol. i. as before. The fact is as follows: In a violent persecution that the church suffered under the emperor GALLUS, A. D. 250, CYPRIAN, bishop of *Carthage*, writes the Roman Christians a congratulatory letter on the heroism with which they suffered in the cause of the Redeemer, in which is the following words: The enemy has learnt "that soldiers of Jesus remain on the watch, sober and armed for the battle; that they cannot be conquered; that they may die, but that they are invincible, because they fear not death; that they *resist not* aggressors, since it is not lawful for them, though innocent, to kill the guilty," &c. (p. 414.) Here it may be observed, that the forgiveness of the Christians, when suffering under the severest and most unjust persecutions, proceeded from *principle*; for their *numbers* were so great, their *habits* so frugal, their *discipline* so strict, their *leaders* of such talents, as would have rendered them formidable enemies to the throne of the Cæsars, had they not learnt that the kingdom of the Redeemer was to be supported by the *sufferings*, and not the *fightings* of his followers, (MILNER, 522.)

Note—Though arms may not be taken up by Christians *against* their own governors, should they persecute them for conscience-sake; yet should a neighbouring state seek to destroy the state of which we are members, it is lawful, in case of actual *invasion*, to take up arms in *defence* of our country, as well as to pray for its security. It is also lawful for persecuted Christians to *forsake* their native country, and take up their abode in any other where Providence may afford them refuge, and the *free exercise* of their religious rights.

V. Practical inferences.

This subject leads us to consider wherein true *uniformity* consists; it holds out important instruction to *masters*,—the *persecutor*,—and the *persecuted*;

persecuted; bids all professors of religion be *zealous* for the Lord; and cautions us to avoid abuse of *terms*.

True *uniformity* in religion consists in nothing less than having Christ formed in us the hope of glory, making his people *one* in the *spirituality* of their minds, the *sublimity* of their hopes, and the *benevolence* of their designs. Wherever uniformity in these things is found to exist among professed Christians, the smaller matters of modes of *discipline*, and points of *doctrine*, are but trifles that do not affect the *essentials* of religion. "Protestant sects, (says a late author, speaking of dissenters from the established church) may be considered branches of the family-tree, which, transplanted, and partaking of the properties of a new soil, and different modes of cultivation, are still a *species* of the same *genus*, however they may be diversified in appearance, or different in denomination."—*Masters*, parents, &c. should apply themselves to understand the doctrine of toleration; be earnest with God for the salvation of their charge; and cautiously avoid coming between God, and the consciences of any under their controul.—Let *persecutors* consider, that every act of opposition to the followers of Christ, is taken by the Lord as done to himself, (*see* Zech. ii. 8. Acts ix. 4.) That by persecution you please Satan, offend God, and destroy your own souls, but will never be able by these arms, to advance the cause you espouse. Consider also the awful deaths, and dreadful anguish of mind that persecutors have suffered; and hope that there is yet mercy for you, if you turn to the Lord. "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways: for why will ye die?"—Let the *persecuted* act with prudence, and not unnecessarily *provoke* their enemies, nor *rush* into danger. When you cannot escape persecution without denying the faith, look up to the Lord for *support*, and suffer with becoming *fortitude*, evidencing *meekness* and good-will towards those that treat you injuriously. Pray that the fiery trial may be blessed to the *purifying* of the church, and your faith. And watch and pray that you may not fall into the temptation of being *lifted up* with the supposed merit of having well endured the trial; for, with temptations, to *pride*, (as *Cyprian* says,) "the enemy of souls loves to attack even the strongest, and to revenge the disgraces he has already sustained from them."—Let every believer be *zealous* to do good, and promote the interest of Christ's kingdom, by letting their light shine, reproving the sinful, instructing the ignorant, relieving the necessitous, &c. with all humility, diligence, and courage.—Let all men learn to distinguish between suffering *for* Christ, and suffering *in* Christ. When we are persecuted for conscience-sake, this is suffering *for* CHRIST; when we

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experience the ordinary afflictions of loss of property, disappointment, pain, sickness, &c.—this is suffering *for* sin; but yet, when suffered by those that are *in* Christ, work together for their good. Yea, suffering *for* Christ will advantage us nothing, except we suffer *in* him also. But let all avoid such an abuse of terms as calling the ordinary afflictions of life ‘enduring pain *for* Christ’s sake,’ evidently is.—“Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.”

N. B. The *General Observations* will be resumed in the next Number.

FINIS.

THE
CHURCH OF PERGAMOS;

IN TWO PARTS.

THE
CHURCH OF PERGAMOS;

IN TWO PARTS.

Part First,
A CRITICAL AND PRACTICAL
LECTURE ON REVEL. II. 12—17.

Part Second.
A LECTURE
ON INSTABILITY IN RELIGION;

(THE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURE OF THIS CHURCH.)

CONSISTING OF
AN INVESTIGATION OF THIS EVIL, CONSIDERED AS A MENTAL
PRINCIPLE ;
ADMONISHING INSTANCES OF INSTABILITY ;
AND
INSTRUCTIVE EXAMPLES OF DECISION OF CHARACTER.

By SAMUEL KITTLE,
Minister of the Gospel.

“ He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed.”
JAMES i. 6.

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CHURCH OF PERGAMOS;

Part First.

OR

A LECTURE ON REVELATION,

CHAP. II. VER. 12.—17.

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write ; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges ; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent ; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches ; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

IN explaining this Epistle, I shall, as heretofore, observe the following order : and consider,

- I. The emblematical *representation* of the Lord Christ.
- II. The *character*, circumstances, &c. of the church.
- III. The *exhortation* given them.
- IV. The *inducements* held out to them.

I. The emblematical *representation* of the Lord Christ, is contained in the following sentence : *These things saith he which*

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hath the sharp sword with two edges. On these words I would observe, that, as this church was corrupt in morals, and the epistle contains both reproof and threatening, the message is sent to them from the church's glorified Head, as armed with a sharp two-edged sword, which, according to ch. i. 16. proceeds *out of his mouth*. Now, a sword is the emblem of retributive justice, and its being represented as *two-edged*, may signify, that the wounds it inflicts will be felt both by those that are without the church of Christ, and also by the unrighteous that are within the pale of the visible church; while the sharpness of its blades intimates the certain and tremendous consequences of its application in vindicating the authority of God against transgressors. It is said of the Lord Christ, by the prophet Isaiah (xi. 4.) that in his official capacity of Judge, "He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." Even as the civil magistrate beareth not the sword as a matter of mere form, but has it put into his hand as the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath, *i. e.* by pronouncing sentence upon him that doeth evil, (Rom. xiii. 4.) so the Lord Christ as the great Governor of the world, and the glorified Head of the church, who is invested with all power in heaven and in earth, beareth not the sword (of executive justice) as an unmeaning shew of authority, but will assuredly use it to execute wrath upon those who oppose his kingdom and disobey his commands. It is indeed particularly pleasing to consider Christ as seated on a throne of grace, inviting the weary, heavy laden, sin-sick souls, to come unto him, that they may find rest and refreshment; but, it is also our duty to contemplate him as the Ruler and Judge both of the church and the world; who in some cases here, and in every case hereafter, "Will render to every man according to his deeds. To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality; eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile." In that dread day when he shall have ascended his great white throne, and summoned all nations to appear before

before him, how tremendous will the sword of his vindictive justice appear, when his lips shall pronounce the sentence of, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."—God forbid that this wound should ever be inflicted on our souls, by the sword of his indignation.

From the sword of vindictive justice being said to proceed *out of the mouth*, or come from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ, I apprehend we have emblematically represented to us, the relation that subsists between the pronouncing of the sentence by Christ as Judge, and the execution of his righteous decision. The sword is, to an earthly judge, an ensign of his office ; but, is it expected that he should *personally* apply it to the condemned criminal? No ; the work of executing the sentence of the law, pronounced by the righteous lips of the Judge, belongs to inferior persons, even to the proper officers of the court. But yet the judge may be said to chastise, imprison, transport, or slay the criminal with the sword of his office, as he pronounces the equitable sentence of the law with his mouth, or the breath of his lips. In like manner, the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Judge of all mankind, chastises, wounds and destroys the sinner, by pronouncing with his lips the righteous sentence of God's holy law ; and the officers of his court are ready to execute that sentence upon the ungodly to the full extent of his appointment, when at the day of judgment he shall give them up to be tormented in the lake of fire and brimstone. There, the terrible diseases that rage in that world of death, and the malicious fury of devils and damned spirits, will be the *actual* and active instruments who inflict the stripes of his displeasure, on those who are banished "from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." There, they must remain from henceforth and for ever denied access to the righteous Judge, enduring the fiery wrath of a sin avenging God, whose favour and image can never now be obtained, since Christ himself has driven them from his presence and gracious regard ; and has moreover delivered up the mediatorial kingdom to the Father, and God appears altogether as a God of holiness, who can have no fellowship with the workers of iniquity. (See 1 Cor. xv. 24.) Then will the wicked fear God, as proving him
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“able to destroy both body and soul in hell.”—O may a gracious fear of offending the Lord now, be sanctified to save us from enduring his eternal displeasure.

II. As to the *character* of this church, it is a mixture of commendable and censurable qualities, which I shall lay before you in the order of the epistle.

1. The circumstances and *commendable* traits of the character of this church, are delineated in ver. 13. *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is ; and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.* Here observe, PERGAMOS the place of their abode, is figuratively called *Satan's seat*, being so notorious for wickedness, and opposition to the gospel, that Satan, who roams about seeking to do mischief to the souls of men in all parts of the habitable world, had, as it were, built himself a castle or citadel at Pergamos, in which he had taken up his stated residence ; and, by means of which, he kept the country in subjection all around. Lamentable is the state of those among whom Satan dwells, since he overwhelms his deluded subjects with the grossest night of darkness, pollutes them with the filth of most abominable crimes, and excludes from them every means of true enjoyment ; yet, alas ! such is the infatuation of the children of men, that many invite him to come and rule over them. Lord save us and our cities from the tyranny of APOLLYON, the *Destroyer* !

A member of this church, who is called ANTIPAS, had been put to death by these wicked inhabitants of Pergamos, who thus proved themselves to be the genuine children of their father the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning. Whether *Antipas* was a private member, a church elder, or the pastor of this Christian congregation, we are not informed, but it appears he was eminently pious, since the Lord calls him his *faithful martyr*. Happy are they, of whom the Lord approves ! “The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.” Whether there is any thing significant in the name ANTIPAS, is uncertain ; yet the mystical nature of the book of Revelation seems to authorise such

a conjecture. But I can by no means allow the propriety of changing ANTIPAS, as some do, into ANTIPATER, though it then signifies *against the FATHER*, or *against the PAPA, PAPACY, or POPE*, and serves as a prediction of the treatment which all those should meet with who dared to oppose the dogmas of that hierarchy. ANTIPAS, (Ἀντίπας is compounded of ἀντί, anti, *against*, and πας, pas, *all*,) and is literally *against ALL*, i. e. *against all* the world of the unregenerate, who consider the pious man as their enemy; he being one who makes war upon their lusts, robs them of their self-righteous hopes, and disturbs their carnal security. The martyrdom of *Antipas*, therefore, may be viewed as a figure of the treatment that *all* the faithful followers of the holy Jesus, might expect to suffer from an enraged world, who would ever be forward to destroy them as a means of self-defence, according to the following predictions of the Saviour, “They shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake.”—“Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor me.” And as the members of this church had seen the accomplishment of these words in the martyrdom of one of their number, they might very reasonably expect that others of their body would soon be called to follow and suffer death in like manner, as the victims of the superstition and licentiousness of their enemies. (But see Lecture on Church of SMYRNA, Part *Second*, in which is opened, § ii. The *treatment* the primitive Christians *suffered* from the world: and § iii. The *sources* of the *enmity* manifested by persecutors against the children of light.)

Yet, notwithstanding the discouragements of their situation, the Christian society in this abandoned and persecuting city, continued openly to avow their regard to the Saviour, by meeting as usual in his name, for the purpose of social religious worship. This was so far pleasing to the Lord; and, had their conduct been uniform, it would have greatly tended to honour his name, and to do good to their deluded neighbours; but, alas! this was not the case with all, for too many of them feared the cross, and
proved

proved by their inconsistent conduct, that their hearts were not wholly with the Lord. This leads me to consider,

2. The *censurable* part of their conduct ; and here I must observe, they are represented, as being corrupt both in principles and practice. *Thou hast them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou them also that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.* Thus, this church is charged with fostering two corrupt parties in its bosom, even the Balaamites and the Nicolaitanes. It is not easy at this distance of time to ascertain the exact difference between these corrupters of Christianity, but I would venture it as a conjecture, that by the *Balaamites* are meant those who taught, that compliance with idolatrous and licentious customs, was lawful as a means of protecting the disciples of Christ from the rage of persecutors ; thus, they resembled Balaam in doing things for the sake of worldly advantage which had not the full approbation of their consciences. And that by the *Nicolaitanes* those are designed whose minds were so blind, and whose hearts were so corrupt, as to assert the absolute indifference of all outward actions to a believer, and to plead for being present at idolatrous feasts, and for committing fornication, as branches of Christian liberty, concerning which only weak minds would entertain a scruple. If this conjecture be right, the Nicolaitanes were the most corrupt, since the Balaamites only justified compliance with these evils as a means of escaping the persecuting rage of the enemies of Christianity ; but these taught, as it appears, from principle, the lawfulness of every species of immorality : both however, were hateful to the Lord, as tending to dishonour his name, and to destroy the souls of mankind. These were, “the Antinomians of the primitive church, a heresy which in one form or another hath always sprung up, when the pure gospel of Christ hath been successfully preached ; being a kind of tares, which the enemy will ever sow among the good seed, as far as he is permitted.” (SCOTT.) But woe unto those who make “Christ the minister of sin.”

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It is remarkable that, "Balaam has the same signification in Hebrew which Nicolas has in Greek, and both signify *conquerors of the people* ; which name might probably be given to the celebrated Balaam, on account of the great influence which he had in the place where he lived." (DODDRIDGE) And sure it is, that through the corrupt state of human nature, doctrines which give leave to avoid the cross of Christ, and to indulge the fleshly appetites, will ever meet with a hearty reception from the great bulk of mankind ; but the true disciples of Christ, " have crucified the flesh with (its) affections and lusts," and are bold to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow the Saviour, in the courageous profession, of his name.

Since *proper names*, are in this book, frequently "used in such a *figurative manner* as to express characters resembling theirs whose names are thus used, see v. 20. Ch. iii. 9.—viii. 11.—ix. 11.—xi. 8." (DODDRIDGE), all those may, in a sense, be called *Balaamites* and *Nicolaitanes*, who purchase worldly advantages at the expence of a holy life, a good conscience, and a courageous profession of the name of Christ. It is to be feared that, in Popish countries, in which Protestant churches were once planted, but are now overthrown, millions of souls are continually sacrificing their eternal interest to this base compliance. Yea, and in our own churches also, how many *Balaamites* and *Nicolaitanes* have we even in this day, who to please the flesh and avoid the cross, run the risk of their soul's eternal welfare ; for thus saith the Lord, "The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (See some further account of the *Nicolaitanes*, CHURCH OF EPHEBUS, Part First, ii. § 3.)

III. I now proceed to consider the nature of the *exhortation* given to the members of this Christian society. The express command of the Lord is that they *repent* ; and he intimates that he requires them to do this *speedily*. The words of the text are, *Repent ; or else I will come unto thee quickly, &c.* Here, they are called upon to repent of, and to forsake those corrupt practices and principles, concerning which he had before reprov'd them ; and by every means

means, to shew a decided abhorrence of the tenets of the Balaamites and Nicolaitanes. (See SCOTT. And let it be observed, that what might be offered here, concerning putting away these pernicious persons from their communion, I refer to *church discipline*. See Lectures on Church of THYATIRA.) Repentance has already, (See Church of EPHESUS, part *first*, iii. § 2) been defined. "After thought producing *sorrow* in the review, and a desire of *amendment*." And surely their conduct had been such, as on reflection was calculated to cause them heart-rending *distress*, and that moreover required a radical cure and universal *reform*. They had acted *foolishly* as it respected themselves, forfeiting the joys of God's salvation for the sake of sensual gratifications; *ungratefully* towards the Redeemer, whose name they had dishonoured, and whose cause they had wounded, by their sinful conformity to vain and licentious customs; and *cruelly* towards mankind, their evil principle and conduct having a natural tendency to stumble, the weak turning them out of the way, and to harden the wicked, leading them to destruction. We also, who have been guilty of the like conformity to the world in joining them, for fear of suffering the reproach of the cross, in the giddy dance, the litigious game, the intemperate feast, the dissipated theatre, &c. have sufficient occasion for Godly sorrow, that we have acted so *silly*, *nicked*, and *injurious* a part, as to forsake the good ways of the Lord, and yield up ourselves to become the servants of unrighteousness. It well becomes all such characters to pour out their lamentations before the Lord, in the following manner. "O Lord God! whose favour is better than life, we have acted *foolishly*, in forsaking thy ways for the vain enjoyments of sense, and thou as a jealous God hath justly hid thy face from us; we deserve that thou shouldest forsake us for ever, but, O! "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit." O Lord! thou art jealous for the honour of thy name among the children of men, thou hast commanded thy disciples, to pray that it may be *hallowed*, and hast enjoined us to let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works; and glorify our Father who is in heaven. But, alas! we have been
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“empty vines, bringing forth fruit unto ourselves.”—“We are ashamed and blush to lift up our face to thee, O God : for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.” But, “O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou (pardon) for thy name’s sake : for our backslidings are many ; we have sinned against thee.” O Lord God ! thou art good, “thy tender mercies are over all thy works,” and thou hast declared thou wilt, “have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth ;” and art graciously pleased to make use of thy servants as the honoured instruments of diffusing the light of the knowledge of thy glory among the children of men ; we have acted *injuriously* towards the souls of our fellow creatures, hiding thy righteousness from them in our hearts, and stumbling them by our irregularities. Lord lay not the sins of others to our charge ; and recover those from the snare of the wicked one, who may have received injury through our inconsistency of conduct. “Hide thy face, (O Lord) from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God ; and renew a right spirit within me.” Happy are those who feel these inward workings of mind. Lord bless us with this repentance unto life. And let it be well understood, that wherever such a spirit is felt within, it will manifest itself by outward actions correspondent to this change of views and feelings. Hence, as repentance has respect to the outward deportment, as well as the inward disposition, the corrupt members of this church, are thus called to *reformation* of conduct, and a uniform adherence to the commandments of the Lord Jesus. Those who do not yield obedience to him as their King, will be condemned by him as their Judge. If we are not willing to suffer with him, in this world ; he will not permit us to reign with him in his kingdom of glory. Lord grant that we may not be conformed to this world : but that we may be transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. (Rom. xii. 2.) And thus, “Bring forth, fruits worthy of repentance.”

While they are called to repentance as the great duty to which they are obliged, they are required to attend to it *speedily*, as they

hope to escape the indignation of the Lord. Surely it becomes all who have lived in sin, to turn unto the Lord by speedy repentance. To remain impenitent, is to continue dishonouring God, injuring mankind, rejecting the gospel salvation, and doing despite to the Spirit of holiness. But alas ! numbers of persons who are occasionally under awakenings of conscience, put off repentance by vain promises of bringing forth the fruits thereof, at some future time, when they think they shall be surrounded by fewer hinderances. All such delays are, in fact, resolutions to continue impenitent and rebellious. Thus *Felix* trembled while Paul reasoned concerning righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, but deferring his repentance till a future season, he continued to live under the power of intemperance, covetousness, and injustice, and died a hardened sinner. We may justly consider these fruitless promises, as the master-pieces of Satan's devices against the souls of the children of men ; for thus he quiets those fears which have a tendency to awaken them to a just concern for their salvation, and carries them imperceptibly forwards in the bad ways of sin, while they falsely dream that they are just about to enter on the narrow path that leads to heaven. O sinner, and especially thou O sinner in Zion, *turn* unto God, and turn *instantly*, lest he in anger withdraw the strivings of his Spirit from thee, and give thee up to the power of sin and Satan, as a rejected reprobate. O why will ye die ? since " God having raised up his Son Jesus, (hath) sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."

IV. The *inducements* held out to this church, are, as being suitable to the mixed state of the society, both of an *alarming* and an *encouraging* nature. (I.) They are justly *alarming* to the followers of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes, concerning whom the Lord says, (v. 16.) Repent ; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and *will fight against them with the sword of my mouth*. 1. By this phrase, I understand the Lord threatens to pass, against these corrupt workers, that righteous sentence which will deliver them up to suffer the just punishment of their offences. (See § i. above.) The officers of vengeance to whom he commits the execution of his wrath, may be afflictive providences, wicked men, fallen

fallen spirits, or an accusing conscience. Sometimes it is one, and sometimes another of these, to whom he gives the commission ; and at length he will give up the impenitent into the hands of all these officers of his court, who, to the countless ages of eternity will execute upon them the fierceness of his indignation. Every blow that is struck by any of these agents, acting in the capacity of ministers of God's wrath, cuts keen and deep as the sword of the Almighty. In every agony under which the condemned sinner groans, he painfully realizes the rod as of God's appointment. Would he look to the friend of sinners for salvation ? Alas ! the Son of God stands related to him in that capacity no longer ; he has shut the door of mercy for ever against the impenitent ; it was the word of his lips that sealed his doom, saying, " Depart from me ye cursed." Would he pray the sword to spare him, saying, " O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet ? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still." The answer would be, " How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against —," the *impenitent*. (Jer. xlvii. 6, 7.) O sinner, the flaming cataracts of hell, the malicious fiends of the bottomless pit, and the worm of an accusing conscience, to whom it is given in commission to punish the condemned by the Lord ; will never rest from works of vengeance. Let us pray, saying, Lord " gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men ;" say not to us " depart ;" fight not against us with *the sword of thy mouth*. In joining the church of Christ, you professedly take refuge in Jesus as your Saviour ; but know that if Christ does not save you from *sin* here, he will not save you from *wrath* hereafter. He is, indeed, " The author of eternal salvation, to all them that obey him." But, " The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." So it was with the celebrated *Balaam*, whose case is referred to in this passage ; he knew something concerning the truth, but " loved the wages of unrighteousness." Therefore the angel of the Lord, with his sword drawn in his hand, withstood him as an adversary. (Num. xxii. 22. and 31.) And though the ass, by turning out of her way, prolonged the life of her rider,

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er, the prophet more stupid than the beast he rode upon, proceeded in his evil course, and was soon afterwards slain by the sword of the children of Israel, (see *Num.* xxxi. 8.) who were the executioners of the wrath of God, upon idolaters and evil doers. Thus, though for a season God *warns*, and *waits* to see whether we will turn to him and live, yet after he has glorified his *mercy* in his compassion and forbearance, he will shortly execute his *wrath* on those that are impenitent, even on "the vessels of wrath fitted, (by sin and impenitency,) to destruction."

(II.) The members of this church are *encouraged* to fight the good fight of faith, by the promise of the *hidden manna*, and a *white stone* with a *new name* inscribed upon it, which shall be given by the righteous judge to him that *overcometh*.

Before I proceed to the explication of these figurative words, I would observe that I apprehend both these promised blessings refer in their proper and restricted sense to the gracious and *appropriate* reward which the Lord Jesus, as the great Head of the church, will confer upon his faithful followers, in the kingdom of his glory.

1. To him that *overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna.* (v. 17.) Here, is an evident reference to the manna that by the command of God was deposited in a golden vase, in the Holy of Holies, close by the Ark of the Covenant, (see *Ex.* xvi. 33. and *Heb.* ix. 4.) This pot of manna, served both as a *memorial* of the goodness of God to Israel, whom he fed in the wilderness with bread from heaven; and also as a *type* of the richness and security of that provision which is made for believers, in the gospel covenant. Thus, by the *manna* we are to understand that abundant supply of grace and glory which the Israel of God receive from the glorified Head of the church. By its being spoken of as *hidden manna*, we are taught that it is *laid up* or safely *reserved* in heaven, under the peculiar care of the Lord Jesus Christ, even as the pot of manna was securely deposited, under the shadowing wings of the Almighty, in the sacred place of the Most High. (See *κεκρυμμενο* to hide; lay up, reserve. PARKHURST.) By having it given us *to eat* of this manna reserved in heaven, we are to understand the full fruition of the unspeakable blessedness of the

the beatific vision, the joys of the new Jerusalem. Concerning the fruition of this happiness, the Saviour says to his followers, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Received to this glory, the children of God "shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Blessed in the presence of the Lord, and satisfied with the salvation of his heavenly kingdom: His redeemed ones, overpowered with the exceeding weight of that glorious blessedness, shall cry out with holy wonder and lively gratitude, *WHAT IS THIS!* (The Hebrew words rendered *Manna*, Ex. xvi. 15. is *מַן מַן* *man hu*, and literally signifies, *What is this?* And Moses immediately answers the question, and says, *This is that bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.* From ver. 31. we learn that this substance was afterwards called *מַן* *man*, probably in commemoration of the question they had asked at its first appearance. Almost all our own ancient versions translate the words, *What is this?* See Dr ADAM CLARKE, on Exodus xvi. 15.) Yea, with eternal and increasing amazement at the unfolding displays of God's unsearchable love, the happy inhabitants of heaven shall still cry out, *MANNA! MANNA!! What is this! What manner of love is this! What glorious salvation!* And it shall be answered them, *This is the food the Lord hath given you to eat*, the bread of God on which you shall feast in heaven. "Eat, O friends! drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." Let us learn hence, to esteem the communications of God's grace above all the joys of time and sense, and to feed daily upon Christ by faith in our hearts. Miserable indeed is the state of those who know not the Lord, not having tasted that he is gracious. Such characters are perishing for lack of the bread of life, and must suffer the gnawings of eternal hunger, even the bitter pains of the second death, unless Christ be revealed in them the hope of glory. O ye friends of this world, ye who live in pleasure and are dead while ye live; did you but know the value of God's grace, ye would sigh for the pleasures of religion. How long

long shall the god of this world blind your hearts, lest you should believe the truth and be saved. May grace enable you to attend to the following exhortation, given to such like characters by the mouth of his holy prophet. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."—"O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him." And ye, who "have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," look to him for the daily communications of his grace, that your souls may be preserved in spiritual health, even as your bodies are by means of the wholesome food with which you are nourished. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." How pleasant is it to partake of the bounties of providence when health and appetite stimulates thereunto; but O, how much more pleasant, to feed with relish upon the communications of divine love. O Lord, evermore give us this bread; ever give us this proof of our souls prospering in the divine life; this assurance of feasting with thee in thy heavenly kingdom. Well may we pray thus, since the Lord hath said, "He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever."

2. The second encouraging promise is, *and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.* (v.17.) In these words we have three things that require particular attention, viz. The *stone*, the *name*, and its being *restricted* to the favoured receiver thereof. That a part of this promise has a reference to the judiciary proceedings of the ancients, is generally allowed; but that the whole is in allusion to the customs of these courts does not clearly appear. Perhaps the former part of the promise may be judiciary, and the latter part be a reference to the ancient mode of conferring names of honorary distinction; but this and some other observations

uations in the following explication I must submit to the judgment of my readers.

“I will give him a *white stone*.” On these words, DODDRIDGE observes, “it is well known, that among the Greeks, a *white stone* was the token of *absolution*, as a *black stone* was of condemnation ; but the writing a *new name* upon this stone is not, that I know of, illustrated by any ancient practice.” But BAILLIE of *Newcastle*, in his Lectures on the Revelation, has the following observation. “It was the form of judicial trials among the Athenians, to which the reward mentioned in the text has an allusion, that, upon an impartial investigation of the case, the person arraigned, being found innocent, was presented, by the judge, or president of the court, with a *white stone*, and commonly an inscription upon it.—*Innocent ; a Worthy Citizen, &c.* Those found guilty had a *black stone* given them, intimating their condemnation*.” May we receive a *white stone* from the Lord Jesus, in that day when he shall judge the world in righteousness.

“And in the stone a *new name* written.” The connection of the *new name* with the *white stone*, seems to be, “That, in the great day on which the absolution of Christ’s people was to be declared publicly, they were to be admitted into that intimate converse, and high state of favour, which is signified by the *new name* ; which *last* circumstance, plainly alludes to the custom of *princes*, who give new names to those whom they have raised to
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* BURDER, in his commentary, observes, that “The stone here referred to is such an one as was used in popular judicature, or in elections ; the custom being to give the votes in either of these by such stones. These were either white or black ; the white was a token of absolution or approbation ; the black, of condemnation or rejection. OVID (Met. lib. xv. l. 42.) expressly mentions, that “black and white stones were used to absolve or condemn persons at ARGOS.” The translation reads,—

“The box receives all *black* ; but, poured out, the stones come forth all *white*, the hue of innocence.” BURDER also remarks, that “There were judges in the Agonistical games, who awarded the prizes to the conquerors by the use of these stones ; a white Stone, with the name of the person, and the value of the prize, being given to such as were victorious.”

very extraordinary *dignity*. (See Gen. xli. 45. And Pharaoh called *Joseph's* name Zaphnath-paaneah.) Dr Goodman thinks this an allusion to the token, or *ticket*, given to the conqueror in the *Olympic games*, expressing his *name*, and signifying the reward he was to receive for his achievements." (DODDRIDGE.) Many other instances of conferring new names of honourable distinction, might be furnished both from civil and sacred history. The following shall serve as specimens. Jacob was new named *Israel*, after he had wrestled with the angel, who said to him, "Thy name shall be called no more *Jacob* (a supplanter), but *Israel*, (a prince, or prevailer with God :) for as a *prince* hast thou power with God and with man, and hast *prevailed*." The Lord Jesus Christ, as designating the glorified state of his humanity, "hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." (Rev. xix. 16.) Thus his name imports the truth of his assertion, "All power is given unto me (as the risen Redeemer,) in heaven and in earth." (Mat. xxviii. 18.) *Scipio*, the Roman general, who in the year of Rome 551, defeated *Hannibal* the *Carthaginian*, and thus subdued Africa to the Roman yoke, had a triumph granted him, and was honoured with the surname of *Africanus*, as a memorial of this his victory. Sometimes new names of honour were given in cases of *adoption*; thus *L. Æmilius*, adopted by *Scipio*, took the name of *Scipio Africanus*. (See other cases, under Article *Name*, PANTOLOGIA, &c. The *new name* promised, is a name of *honourable distinction*, which Christ will confer upon his conquering people. "A *new name* signifies one by which the righteous shall be distinguished in heaven." (Mrs TRIMMER'S Bible.) O Lord, grant us a name among the princes of thy people. "Wouldst thou know, what thy *new name* will be? The way to this is plain: *Overcome*. Till then all thy enquiries are vain. Thou wilt then read it on the *white stone*." (WESLEY.) The white stone, is said to have a name written in it, *which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it*. It is obvious, from these words, that the enjoyment of this new name of honourable distinction, is in some sense *restricted* to the favoured receiver thereof: but the question difficult to determine is, wherein doth this *restriction* consist?

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It is quite beside my design, to confuse the minds of my readers with the reciting of erroneous sentiments ; I shall therefore submit to them the following conjecture, as appearing to me to give the sense of the passage. The proper understanding of this part of the promise, appears very much to depend on being able to fix the sense the verb *to know*, which I presume is to be understood here in the sense of *recognition*, the *fourth* sense given in Dr JOHNSON'S *Dictionary*; from his illustrations of this sense of the verb *to know*, I select the two following.

" At nearer view he thought he *knew* the dead,
And call'd the wretched man to mind."

FLATMAN.

" And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was *known* of them in breaking of bread." (Luke xxiv. 35.) In both these instances, *to know*, evidently signifies *to recognise*, or recollect, as having seen before. To these illustrations of this sense of the verb, I beg leave to add, 2 Cor. v. 21. where the Apostle, speaking of the immaculate Jesus being given up by the Father, to sufferings and death for the redemption of mankind, says, " For he hath made him to be sin (a sin-offering) for us, who *knew* (*recognised, recollected*, as having been committed by him) no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Apply this sense of the verb to the text, and it informs us, that the new name of honourable distinction which the Lord Jesus Christ, will graciously give to conquering believers in the day when he shall absolve them at his bar, will be so appropriate to the peculiarity of their circumstances, that no other person will *recognise* it, as characteristic of the varied success of *his* Christian warfare. That all names of old were *significant* of some quality or circumstance relating to the person named, is so generally *known* as not to need the formality of a proof. And as most of these honourable names will probably be composed of sundry epithets, this at once furnishes sources for an *ample supply* of titles; serves to distinguish the *specific* character of each individual; and ranges the heavenly worthies according to their *generical* relation to each other. I trust my readers will excuse the length of the following

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quotation,

quotation, as it is an apt illustration of my meaning. "It is an observation deserving attention, says the *Abbe Barthelemi*, that the greater part of names found in Homer are marks of distinction. They are given in honour of the qualities most esteemed in the heroic ages. From the word *POLEMO*, which signifies *war*, have been formed *Thopolemus* and *Archeptolemus*, the names of two heroes mentioned in the *Iliad*. The former name signifies *able to support*, and the latter *able to direct*, the labours of *war*. By adding to the word *MACHE*, or *battle*, certain prepositions and different parts of speech, which modify the sense in a manner always honourable, are composed the names *Amphimachus*, *Antimachus*, *Promachus*, *Telemachus*. Proceeding in the same way with the word *HONOREA*, *strength* or *intrepidity*, they formed the names *Agapenor*, he who *esteems valour*; *Agenor*, he who *directs* it. From *THOES*, *swift*, are derived, *Alcathoes*, *Panthoes*, *Perithoes*, &c. From *NOUS*, mind or intelligence, come *Astynoes*, *Arsinoes*, *Autenoes*, &c. From *MEDES*, *counsel*, *Agamedes*, *Eumedes*, *Lycomedes*, *Thrasymedes*, and so on." (See *ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA*, and *PANTOLOGIA*. *Name*.) Thus the worthies of heaven shall all be distinguished according to their respective excellencies, by appropriate names of honour, that upon every mention will tend to increase the esteem in which they are held among their glorious companions, the blessed inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, and fill their own souls with increasing wonder and gratitude to the God of their salvation, who has counted them worthy of this calling, and fulfilled (concerning them,) all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. Happy place! blest society! honourable reward! Lord grant to us, that we also may have our names written among the living in Jerusalem. To this end, make us shine in thine image, by forgiving our sins, adopting us into thy family, sanctifying our souls, and keeping us by thy power through faith unto salvation. Help us, O Lord, believingly and frequently to think of the honours of thy heavenly kingdom, that we may not be offended at bearing thy cross, and suffering thy reproach.

How properly are these glorious rewards of Christ's eternal kingdom, opposed to the perishing wealth, worthless honour, and destructive

destructive pleasures, wherewith the Balaamites, and Nicolaitanes, seduced their deluded followers. And let it moreover be remarked, that these glorious promises to conquering saints, stand reversed to all seduced and seducing sinners, and thus inform them not only what they shall lose, but also what they must suffer, as the righteous reward of their evil doings. Such characters shall receive from the Judge of all the earth, a *black stone* of condemnation; containing an appropriate name of *dishonour* and *infamy*, which will make them the objects of contempt and scorn among the abandoned crews of their wicked companions, and shall painfully remind them of their wicked abuse of God's mercy and rich forbearance. O ye sinful and double minded receive instruction, forsake your evil ways and vicious comrades, seek the Lord in truth, and join yourselves to his faithful people, lest when they are exalted to glory and honour, you should be thrust down to darkness and despair; and seeing your pious acquaintances afar off in Abraham's bosom, have to lament, saying, "This was he whom we had sometime in derision, and a proverb of reproach. We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour: how is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints.—What hath pride profited us? or what good hath riches with our vaunting brought us? All these things are passed away like a shadow." (*Wisdom of Sol.* v. 3—9.) But, O ye children of the Most High, magnify that grace that hath appeared to you, and cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart. To his love and grace I commend you, and, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to God only wise, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

PART

Part Second.

IMPROVEMENT AND APPLICATION OF THE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURE OF THE CHURCH OF PERGAMOS.

OR,

A DISCOURSE ON INSTABILITY.

REVELATION ii, 14—16.

I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent ; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS church, though once exemplary for piety, was now dishonoured by fostering in its bosom many timid unstable, double-minded, time-serving members ; namely the *Balaamites* and *Nicolaitanes*, who vainly endeavoured to reconcile conformity to the sinful customs of their idolatrous neighbours with the profession of the religion of Christ Jesus.

It must be acknowledged, they lay under strong temptation to this evil compliance, for their reputation as men of understanding, their success in trade as men of business, their liberty as members of civil society, yea, and their very lives, were exposed to imminent danger should they dare to oppose, or even dissent from customs that were sanctioned by long continued usage, and which

which enjoyed the support of the civil power. The members of this church could have no doubt of the disposition of the wicked inhabitants of Pergamos, to persecute and destroy those who would "not run with them to the same excess of riot" in which they indulged; the late martyrdom of *Antipas* left no room for hesitation on this head; but at the same time they should have considered themselves as the soldiers of Jesus, whose only business in the world, was to promote the interests of his kingdom, by discountenancing vice, and encouraging virtue. And as they did not answer this end, but dishonoured the Lord by their sinful compliances, he threatens to fight against and consume these corrupt members of this church, except they should speedily bring forth the fruits of evangelical repentance. Sure it is, that those who are not hearty in the cause of Christ, are against him; and those who are not willing to fight the battles of the Redeemer in opposition to the god of this world, must even expect to be punished by him as betrayers of his interest.

We profess the religion of our divine Master, under circumstances much more favourable, for we enjoy the advantage of having Christianity established by law, as the national religion, and are moreover protected in our right of private judgment by the sanction of the Toleration Act, lately confirmed and extended by our excellent governors. But, alas! it is not possible to *establish* the religion of the heart, and the carnal mind will never *tolerate* opposition to its lusts, but ever continue opposed to the spirit of true religion. There is, therefore, as much necessity for professed Christians to be "valiant for the truth," in this our day, and in these the lands of our nativity, as there was for believers to play the hero in primitive times, among the Greeks and Romans. But, ah! it is to be feared, we also have many *Balaamites* and *Nicolaitanes* lurking in our churches, who, for the sake of honour, pleasure, or gain, compromise matters with men of worldly minds; and, by various sinful conformities to fashionable evils, shew themselves to be of the class of *time-servers*, and undecided professors of the gospel.

That you who read these pages may not be of this number, I shall, by the blessing of God, endeavour,

I.

I. To investigate the nature of *instability*, as a mental principle.

II. Remind you of some *admonishing* examples of instability in religious concerns.

III. Hold up some *instructive* examples of decision of character in the same important matters.

IV. Make some practical inferences.

I. I am to lead you to investigate the nature of *instability* viewed as a mental principle; and as it is the opposite to *decision* of mind, I presume it will be best understood by viewing it in connection therewith. Before I proceed to this investigation, I would advertise my readers, that I am indebted to FOSTER'S excellent Essay on *Decision of Character*, for many of the following ideas and extracts.

1. In giving a general view of the difference between the conduct of *decided* and *undecided* character, I shall avail myself of the following observations.

"In accommodating the plans of conduct to the train of events, the difference between two men may be no less than that in the one instance, the *man* is subservient to the events, and in the other, the *events* are made subservient to the man.

Some men seem to have been taken along by a succession of events, and, as it were, handed forward in quiet passiveness from one to another, without any determined principle in their own characters, by which they could constrain those events to serve a design formed antecedently to them, or apparently, in defiance of them. The events seized them as a neutral material, not they the events. Others, advancing through life with an internal invincible determination of mind, have seemed to make the train of circumstances, whatever they were, conduce as much to their chief design as if they had taken place on purpose."

2. I shall turn your attention to *clearness of conception*, *activity*, and *courage*, in all of which the decided character excels, and the unstable one is deficient. The man who has but indistinct and confused views of any subject, must hesitate at every step, not knowing but he may be wasting his strength for an attainment

tainment of no value, or else that his exertions may tend to lead him from, and not towards, the desired object. But the man who has thoroughly investigated his subject, and is conscious to himself that it has by this means been presented to his mind in a distinct and perspicuous manner ; who has viewed it in all its bearings ; and has been led to the same conclusions by a dissimilar train of thoughts ; gains a confidence in his own judgment, that is not easily shaken. He anticipates the consequence of such and such a mode of conduct ; he knows, to some extent, both how to proceed, and what to expect. " And as to those new combinations of circumstances which no calculation can foresee, or previous experience apply, he can trust to the resources which he is persuaded his intellect will open to him ; or is humbly confident, if he be a devout man, that the Supreme Intelligence will not suffer (instruction and help) to be wanting to him, when the occasion (of his necessity) arrives."

A man of an indolent disposition, may confine himself to *ideas*, without advancing into *realities*, or being decided in behalf of any particular mode of conduct. Such an one may remain unmoved, unexcited to action ; yea, notwithstanding his mind is at times taken up with the noblest speculations, he may remain, " a reasoning block, or philosophic stone," all contemplation, without ardour. Such an one may engage in the most important affair with indifference, and after a season relinquish it without concern. But the man whose intellect, as we may say, is " invested with a glowing atmosphere of passion, under the influence of which, the cold dictates of reason take fire, and spring into active powers," exhibits a very different spectacle. He disdains to adopt a purpose towards the effecting of which he will not devote his utmost exertions. His language concerning his design is beautifully expressed by the apostle, in the following words: " When I was thus minded, did I use lightness ? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay ?" *i. e.*, a halting between decision and instability. No ; he is linked to his purpose ; his soul is all ardour for its accomplishment ; and he feels that nothing but death or insurmountable calamity can

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cause him to desert his design ; which grows in importance to his apprehension, as he exerts himself in its behalf. The mere speculatist, has not the most distant idea of the concern the ardent man feels for the success of his undertaking.

The man that is timid and cautious, who fears to encounter a contemptuous sneer, and to suffer the attack of pain, who is looking out to see that his path is clear from threatening danger, before he will venture to proceed therein, is very likely to be discouraged in his most laudable pursuits, and diverted from prosecuting his best concerted designs, since contempt and opposition, in one form or another, will always menace those who are engaged in any great undertaking. But on the other hand, the man who is possessed of a good degree of courage and fortitude, is likely to proceed on his way in spite of these opposing evils ; his language is, ‘ I should despise a being, though it were myself, whose agency could be held enslaved by the gloomy shapes of imagination, by the whistling or the howling of winds, by the shrieks of owls, by the shades of midnight, or by human words or frowns. I should be indignant to feel that in the commencement of an adventure I could think of nothing but the deep pit by the side of the way, where I must walk, and into which I may slide ; the mad animal which it is not impossible I may meet ; or the assassin who may lurk in a thicket of yonder wood. And I disdain to compromise the interests that rouse me to action, for the privilege of a disgraceful security.’ This is the spirit, with which the adventurous traveller, the warlike hero, the pious reformer, and the zealous missionary, must commence their career, for ‘ either they must allay their fire of enterprise, or else hold themselves in readiness to be exploded by it from the world.’ The man that can thus brave ridicule, sufferings, and death, in order to accomplish his purpose, is indeed a decided character ; and when once he comes to be viewed by mankind in this light, he will often have the pleasure to find, that the scornful and the hostile, refrain from interfering with him, knowing that it would but be labour in vain to commence an attack. But, on the other hand, a spirit of timidity, as it soon discovers itself, so it ever tends to embolden and multiply opposers, who will divert themselves

selves with making such an one tremble before them, and with causing him to vary his conduct according to the dictates of their pleasure.

3. It is now time to turn our attention, to the influence that *opposition*, *desertion*, and *success*, have upon different characters. *Opposition* has a natural tendency to strengthen the principle of re-action in the human mind. Hence persecution has ever been found the means of spreading that interest it meant to have destroyed. The powers of the soul would never have been roused into that energy of action, which has so often been manifested in seasons of oppression, if the raging blast of persecution had not fanned the flame of ardour. 'An irresolute mind indeed might be quelled and subjugated by a formidable kind of opposition; but the strong wind which blows out a taper, augments a powerful fire, if there is fuel enough, to an indefinite intensity.' *Desertion* is truly discouraging, and tends to damp the zeal of the active, to shake the resolution of the bold; and cause even the judicious to suspect that they may be walking in a wrong path; and numbers, when forsaken of their companions, and denied the further aid of those they had been used to look up to for counsel and help, have been discouraged even to the abandoning of the most eligible designs. Others out of weakness have waxed strong, and being obliged to deliberate without consultation, 'and to execute without assistance;' they have displayed an heroic courage, or practised a generous virtue, that has been the admiration of mankind. *Success* promises fair to establish the mind in the decided esteem of our pursuits, from a persuasion which it is calculated to bring with it that we are in the right way, and are favoured by Divine Providence which has undertaken our cause, and is about to reward us with all we desire. Yet, success does not always give decision to the mind, since instances are not wanting of those who have been thus favoured, cooling in their ardour, and turning aside to other objects. We may learn from this, the absolute necessity of having a noble aim, even an infinite good in pursuit, and keeping a lively faith in constant exercise, that nothing may be able to intimidate us on the one hand,

hand, or divert us on the other to forsake that way which grace directs us in, and of which wisdom approves.

II. I shall now turn your attention to some *admonishing* examples of instability. Many unstable characters are to be found in all the walks of life, who make themselves ridiculous to those who behold them, and involve themselves and their dependants in a variety of difficulties, by their foolish inconsistencies ; this multitude I must pass by unnoticed, and proceed to take a view of the undecided religious character. Numerous instances of this unhappy state of mind might be brought forward from that never-failing fund of information and admonition, the Word of God ; but I shall confine myself to an example from each Testament, and have fixed upon the characters of *Ahab* and *Herod* for this purpose : let us view the men, and learn wisdom from the sad effects of their folly.

AHAB, the king of Israel, was professedly a worshipper of Jehovah, according, however, to the corrupt manner of the ten tribes ; but having unlawfully taken to wife *Jezebel*, a zealous votary of the idol Baal, he suffered this bad woman to gain such an ascendancy over him, that the sacred historian informs us, through her means he came to excel all others in corrupting and opposing the worship of God, for “ there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.” (1 Kings xxi. 25.) Yet, there was this difference between the characters of Jezebel and Ahab, that she *heartily* and *uniformly* espoused the cause of idolatry, never in one instance or in the least respect deviating from a professed regard to its interest ; while he *unstable* and *irresolute*, was trying to serve two masters, thus rendering himself false to both, but most false to the best ; and is held up as an object of pity and contempt for the admonition of future generations. I beg leave to turn your attention to two noted instances of the instability of his character. The *first* respects the contest Elijah had with the 800 priests of Jezebel, respecting the divinity of their different objects of religious worship, in which the Lord manifested himself to be the only true God, by sending miraculous fire from heaven and consum-

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ing the sacrifice that was laid upon his altar. On this being done, Elijah and the people considered themselves bound to execute the law that commanded idolators to be put to death, and Ahab himself as convinced of the propriety of this sentence, stood by and saw them slain. Thankful that the Lord had looked upon him in mercy, and given the promise of refreshing showers, and satisfied with the propriety of what was done in order to restore the public worship of Jehovah, he returned to his palace, and told Jezebel his queen all that had been transacted by the prophet Elijah. Ahab, no doubt, meant this relation as a defence of his own conduct, in suffering her priests to be slain before his face, and perhaps hoped to have brought Jezebel to favour the worship of that God who had so wonderfully proved himself the Almighty; but neither the terrible judgments which the Lord had inflicted on the land, the glorious display of his majesty in sending fire from heaven, nor his abundant mercy in granting them fruitful rain, at all affected her; on *one thing* alone her mind was fixed, for decided in behalf of idolatry, she felt for the death of her priests, trusted to replace them speedily, and burning with anger against Elijah as the author of their destruction, in the fury of her rage, and the full confidence of soon bringing over her unstable husband to second her exertions, she sent him a menacing message, saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time." (xix. ii.) Elijah was so well acquainted with the instability of Ahab, and the ascendancy of Jezebel over him, that he had no doubt but as he had suffered her to slay the prophets of the Lord before, so he would not now interfere to defend his life from destruction; this being his opinion concerning Ahab, and having at present received no intimation from the Spirit of God, that He would miraculously interfere in his behalf, "He arose and went (fled) for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah." Soon after this the Lord appeared to Elijah, and punished the unstable Ahab, by commanding him to anoint Jehu to be king over Israel in the stead of Ahab, whose destruction he had determined.

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The *other* instance referred to, respects his evil conduct in relation to the affair of Naboth the Jezreelite, whose vineyard he desired to have purchased to make an addition to his palace gardens, but, his request was rejected by the conscientious Naboth, who had respect to the law of the Lord, (Lev. xxv. 23.) which commanded that the land he had given them should not be alienated from their heirs for ever. This reason was so just a ground of refusal, that Ahab lost all hopes of attaining the vineyard, but not having resolution and piety sufficient to enable him to forego his extravagant desire, he gave up the management of this business to Jezebel his queen, who, despising the scruples by which he was withheld from seizing upon the inheritance, accomplished the destruction of Naboth and his sons, as blasphemers of God and the King, (comp. 1 Kings xxi. 13. with 2 Kings ix. 26.) and then invited Ahab to go and take possession of the vineyard which Naboth had refused to sell him for money, it being now a forfeiture to the crown. Much as Ahab desired the vineyard of *Naboth*, the method *Jezebel* had taken to procure it for him would no doubt make him pause for a moment,—but what had he to do with this diabolical scheme? he did not form it, he had taken no active part in causing the murder of Naboth and his family; if he should refuse to avail himself of his wife's policy in this affair, he could never more expect her interference in his behalf; besides, the man was actually dead, and while his refusing to claim his forfeited inheritance could not avail to restore the dead to life again, it would tend to raise suspicions concerning the justice of his execution. With such reasonings as these Ahab might satisfy his mind concerning the propriety of laying claim to the forfeited estate, for he rose up and went “down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite to take possession” thereof. His heart being thus hardened, and his mind blinded by the deceitfulness of sin, he might begin to congratulate himself on his good fortune; but in the midst of his triumph, the prophet *Elijah*, as the messenger of the Lord, met him in the vineyard, and declared to him that for this thing the Lord would enter into judgment with him, and that dogs should lick up his blood, even his, in the self same place where they had licked up the blood of Naboth.

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This instance may serve to shew us that if we are not decidedly opposed to every sinful desire, our corrupt passions and seducing companions will assuredly lead us to acquiesce in plots of vice the most abandoned and destructive.

HEROD ANTIPAS, the tetrarch of Judea, and son of Herod the Great, was at times under serious impressions, and furnished hopes of a virtuous conduct, but he soon proved himself to be one of the *double-minded* who are unstable as water and cannot excel. We are pleased for a moment to read concerning him, that he attended the ministry of that faithful servant of God, *John the Baptist*, hearing him gladly and doing many things; but our joy is soon damped by the information, that being reproved by John for all the evil he had done, and especially on account of Herodias the wife of his brother Philip whom he had wickedly taken to himself, having divorced his own wife, (the daughter of Aretas the king of Arabia) for the sake of this incestuous connection; he was exasperated at the faithful reproof of the Baptist, and dismissing him from his presence, shut him up in prison. Herodias, it appears, desired he should have been put to death, but Herod, for a season made a stand against her desires in this instance, for he revered John knowing in his conscience that he was a just and holy man; and so strong was his persuasion of the sanctity of John's character, that when in an hour of dissipated mirth, he had madly promised with an oath to grant the daughter of Herodias, who had charmed him and his company with her graceful dancing, whatsoever she should request, were it even to the value of one half of his kingdom; he hesitated to comply with her petition, when she surprised him by asking as instructed by her mother, the head of John the Baptist. On the one hand, Herod considered John to be the servant of the Lord; but on the other hand, he had bound himself by oath before his nobles, to grant the young woman whatever she should petition for, and he could not with honour deny his word. Besides, he had involved himself in difficulty, for having promised to grant her desire though she should ask of him ever so largely, he might have serious fears that if *this* request was denied, her *next demand* might go near to his ruin; and as for breaking off with
Herodias

Herodias altogether, as he ought to have done, with righteous indignation at her cruel licentiousness, he could not once give way to the painful thought: so after an ineffectual struggle of mind between what he felt to be his *duty*, and considered as his *interest*, he gave the command, and an officer was immediately sent to the prison, who speedily returned with the Baptist's head, which was delivered to the damsel in a silver dish, who on receiving the same carried it to her mother, whose revenge was now amply satisfied. Thus the wretched Herod was carried captive by his depraved passions and abandoned companions, and from being irresolute for the truth, he became the willing servant of unrighteousness. Both these examples teach us that to be undecided for God, is the broad way to rebellion against him; and that if we have any desire at all to live in the fear of the Lord, we should of all things avoid forming matrimonial connections with those who are wicked or irreligious; since such characters like *Jezebel* and *Herodias*, have no sense of duty or desire after God, and will not fail to avail themselves of every opportunity of making us their accomplices in iniquity.—*Pilate* in his conduct towards the Lord Jesus, whom he knew to be innocent, and yet wickedly condemned to be crucified, is another melancholy instance of the dangerous situation of the *undecided*. O Lord God, graciously save us from this sin of *double-mindedness*, by which so many have dishonoured thee, and ruined their own souls.

III. I now call your attention to an instructive scene, even the *pious* examples of the decided in the cause of religion. For this purpose I have selected one instance from each Testament, and one from ecclesiastical history. These characters considered as children of God had learnt to seek his honour as the grand thing they desired, and which alone they lived to promote; *here* their minds were fixed, the whole soul was turned this way, every faculty and power was alive to this great subject; the eye was *single*, the intention *pure*, the design *one*; there was no opposing, no other object to divert their attention; hence the whole body was full of light, and they were never at a loss to know how to act, and never missed a favourable opportunity of shewing forth the praises of the God of their salvation. But this will appear more plain

plain from a perusal of their edifying history ; the Lord grant that while we read it we may imbibe their spirit, and like them become *valiant for the truth*. 1. King Nebuchadnezzar had made an image of gold, to the dedication of which as an object of religious worship, he summoned the numerous office-bearers of his extensive kingdom, who, all at the appointed signal prostrated themselves before the idol ; with the exception of three Hebrew captives, who had been raised by the favour of the prince to honourable office : these alone refused to give religious worship to this golden image. They were immediately accused to the king, who in the fury of insulted majesty commanded them to be brought before him ; when he saw them, he offered them their forfeited lives if they were willing to bow down to the image he had made, but if not, he assured them they should be immediately thrown into the midst of the raging fire that burned in honour of the idol, and “ who (says he,) is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands ? ” (Dan. iii. 15.) These men felt themselves indebted to the king for their promotion, they understood the farther honours they might expect from him if they would but comply in this particular with his request, they saw the consuming fire before them, and felt tenderly for their relatives, who by their non-compliance would be exposed to degradation and poverty ; but they feared God, and sought his glory, and therefore firmly answered the king, that they could not comply, and were content to leave the event to the Lord, who if he pleased was able to send them deliverance. The consequence was, as they must have expected it would be, the king became enraged against them, and commanding the furnace to be heated to a greater intensity, these three men (whom they did not stop to degrade, by divesting them of their robes of office), were bound, and with their ensigns of honour, cast by the most mighty men of Nebuchadnezzar’s army into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. But God remembered them, and though the flames of the furnace slew the men who cast them in, *they* walked unhurt in the midst of the fire ! Thus by means of their heroic decision, they happily avoided the upbraidings of their own mind ; secured the favour and interposition of their God ; and are held up

as instructive examples to future generations : yea, they shall be had in everlasting remembrance ; to eternity, conscience will approve, God commend, and admiring millions call them blessed.

2. PAUL of Tarsus appears always to have been a *decided character*. Before he was divinely illuminated, considering the Christians as mischievous innovaters on the established religion, he thought they ought not to be tolerated by the Jewish rulers ; and this being his settled, though mistaken opinion, his ardent mind led him to action, and we find him volunteering his service even to distant cities, so that he might extirpate this growing heresy. His miraculous conversion had no tendency to *destroy* the ardour of his mind, but it was the means of *sanctifying* this disposition, and engaging it in the best of causes, even the promotion of the honour of the Redeemer's name ; for as soon as ever his views were altered by the gracious appearance of the Lord Christ unto him, he became the decided promoter of that cause he had in his state of ignorance so violently opposed. He did not regard his honour, interest, and ease, but immediately began to preach the gospel, not conferring " with flesh and blood." In prosecuting the work of the ministry he laboured more abundantly than any other of the apostles, and with stripes, imprisonment, and death in prospect, should he dare to proceed in this way, he undauntedly says, " None of these things move me ; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Yet, Paul's firmness in this instance was not from the *want* of sensibility, but from the power of persevering in the prosecution of his momentous design, while all *alive* to the tenderest sympathy with his weeping friends ; whose tears at the apprehension of his danger went near to *break his heart*, though he could face the threatening danger with *undaunted* courage. Such a happy union of fortitude and tenderness, *Foster* calls the utmost and rarest endowment of humanity. (Vol. I. p. 199.) The decision of the disciples of Jesus, differs essentially from that of the admirer of Zeno, (the Stoic Philosopher ;) and is illustrated by this view of the state of the Apostle's mind, and the following anecdote.

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A martyr being asked, whether he did not love his wife and children, who stood weeping by him ? " Love them ? Yes, (said he) if all the world were gold, and at my disposal, I would give it all, for the satisfaction of living with them, though it were in a prison ; yet, in comparison of Christ, I love them not." May the Lord help all who read these pages to come unto him, hating father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters ; yea, and their own lives also : that they may be acknowledged by him both now and hereafter as his true disciples.

3. I have selected from *Ecclesiastical History*, the following account of the pious decision of the mind of VIVIA PERPETUA, a young lady of Carthage, the ancient capital of Africa, who suffered martyrdom about A.D. 202, under what is called the fifth persecution. This account, in which several persons appear in the same amiable view, of *the decided lovers of the Lord Jesus*, tends to throw considerable light on the spirit of the times near the commencement of the gospel dispensation ; and strongly evinces that the softer sex are capable of being decidedly interested in the best of causes, and that in circumstances most hostile to perseverance in such a disposition. These things being premised, I proceed to give the account at large as it is found in the 1st vol. of Dr MILNER's *History of the Church of Christ*, p. 304. &c. and beg my readers in perusing the same to have particular regard to the uniform desire manifested by her and her companions to promote the honour of the Lord, and the salvation of all with whom they had any intercourse.

" At Carthage itself, four young catechumens (candidates for baptism) were seized, *Revocatus* and *Felicitas*, slaves to the same master ; with *Saturninus*, and *Secondulus*, also *Vivia Perpetua*, a lady of quality. She had a father, a mother, and two brothers, of whom one was a catechumen : she was about twenty-two years of age ; was married, and was then pregnant ; and moreover, she had a young child at her breast. To these five, by an excess of zeal too common at that time, *Satur*, voluntarily, joined himself. While they were in the hands of the persecutors, the father of Perpetua, himself a Pagan, but full of affection to his favourite offspring, importuned her to fall from the faith. His in-

treaties were vain. Her pious constancy appeared to him an absurd obstinacy, and enraged him so much as to induce him to give her very rough treatment. For a few days while these catechumens were under guard, but not confined in the prison, they found means to be baptized; and *Perpetua's* prayers were directed particularly for patience under bodily pains. They were then put into a dark prison. To the rest, who had been more accustomed to hardships, this change of scene had not any thing in it very terrible. To her, who had experienced nothing but the delicacies of genteel life, it was peculiarly formidable and distressing: Her concern for her infant was extreme.—*Tertius* and *Pomponius*, two deacons of the Church, obtained by money, that the prisoners might go out of the dark dungeon, and for some hours refresh themselves in a more commodious place, where *Perpetua* gave the breast to her infant, and then recommended him carefully to her mother. For some time her mind was oppressed with concern for the misery she had brought on her family; though it was for the sake of a good conscience; but she grew more composed, and her prison became a palace.

Her father, some time after, came to the prison overwhelmed with grief; which, in all probability, was augmented by the reflections he had made on his own rough and angry behaviour to her at their last interview. "Have pity, my daughter," says he, "on my grey hairs; have pity on your father, if I was ever worthy of that name: if I myself have brought you up to this age; if I have preferred you to all your brethren, make me not a reproach to mankind; respect your father and your aunt—these, it seems, were joined in the interests of paganism, while the mother appears to have been a Christian, otherwise his silence concerning her seems scarcely to be accounted for;—have compassion on your son, who cannot survive you: lay aside your obstinacy, lest you destroy us all: for if you perish we must all of us shut our mouths in disgrace." The old gentleman, with much tenderness, kissed her hands, threw himself at her feet, weeping and calling her no longer his daughter, but his mistress—the mistress of his fate! He was the only person of the family who did not rejoice at her martyrdom. *Perpetua*, though inwardly

torn

born with filial affection, could offer him no other comfort than to desire him to acquiesce in the divine disposal.

The next day they were all brought into the court, and examined in the presence of vast crowds. There the unhappy old gentleman appeared with his little grandson, and taking *Perpetua* aside, conjured her to have some pity on her child. The procurator, *Hilarian*, joined in the suit, but in vain. The old man then attempted to draw his daughter from the scaffold. *Hilarian* ordered him to be beaten; and a blow, which he received with a staff, was felt by *Perpetua* very severely.

Hilarian condemned them to be exposed to the wild beasts. They then returned cheerfully to their prison. *Perpetua* sent the deacon, *Pomponius*, to demand her child of her father, which he refused to return. The health of the child, we are told, suffered not; nor did *Perpetua* feel any bodily inconvenience.

Secundulus died in prison. *Felicitas* was eight months gone with child; and seeing the day of the public shows to be near, she was much afflicted lest her execution should take place before her delivery. Her companions joined in prayer for her three days before the spectacles; and she was, with great difficulty, delivered of a child. One of the door-keepers, who, perhaps, expected to have found in her a stoical insensibility, and heard her cries, said, "Do you complain of THIS? what will you do when you are exposed to the beasts?" *Felicitas* answered, with a sagacity truly Christian, "It is I that suffer now, but then there will be another with me, that will suffer for me, because I shall suffer for his sake."—Her newborn daughter was delivered to a Christian woman, who nursed it as her own.

The tribune appears to have credited a report, that the prisoners would free themselves by magical practices; and, in consequence, to have treated them roughly. "Why don't you," says *Perpetua*, "give us some relief? Will it not be for your honour that we should appear well fed at the spectacles?"

This address of hers had the desired effect: It procured a very agreeable alteration in their treatment. On the day before the shows they were supplied with their last meal; and the martyrs did their utmost to convert it into an *αγάπη*: (*agape*, a love

love feast,) they ate in public: their brethren and others were allowed to visit them: and the keeper of the prison himself, by this time, was converted to the faith: they talked to the people, and warned them to flee from the wrath to come: they pointed out to them their own happy lot, and smiled at the curiosity of those who ran to see them. "Observe well our faces," cries *Satur*, with much animation, "that ye may know them at the day of judgment."

The Spirit of God was much with them on the day of trial: joy, rather than fear, was painted on their looks. *Perpetua*, cherished by Jesus Christ, went on with a composed countenance and an easy pace, holding down her eyes, lest the spectators might draw wrong conclusions from their vivacity. Some idolatrous garments were offered them by the Pagans: "We sacrifice our lives," said they, "to avoid every thing of this kind."—The tribune desisted from his demand.

Perpetua sang, as already victorious: and *Revocatus*, *Saturninus*, and *Satur*, endeavoured to affect the people with the fear of the wrath to come. Being come into *Hilarian's* presence, "Thou judgest us," said they, "and God shall judge thee." The mob was enraged, and insisted on their being scourged before they were exposed to the beasts. It was done, and the martyrs rejoiced in being conformed to their Saviour's sufferings.

Perpetua and *Felicitas* were stripped, and put into the nets, and exposed to a wild cow. The spectators were shocked at the sight: for the one was an accomplished beauty, and the other had been newly delivered of a child.—The assisting executioner drew them back and covered them with loose garments. *Perpetua* was first attacked; and falling backwards she put herself into a reclining posture; and seeing her habit torn by her side, she retired to cover herself: she then gathered up her hair, that she might seem less disordered: she raised herself up, and seeing *Felicitas* bruised, she gave her her hand and lifted her up: then they went toward the gate, where *Perpetua* was received by a catechumen, called *Rusticus*, who attended her. "I wonder," said she, "when they will expose us to the cow."—She had been, it seems, insensible of what had passed, nor could believe it till she

'saw

saw on her body and clothes the marks of her sufferings. She caused her brother to be called, and addressing herself to him and *Rusticus*, she said, "Continue firm in the faith ; love one another ; and be neither frightened nor offended at our sufferings."

The people insisted on having the martyrs brought into the midst of the amphitheatre, that they might have the pleasure of seeing them die : (for the manner in which the ancient heathen delighted in scenes of blood, see Lecture on Church of SMYRNA, Part Second iii. § 4.) some of them rose up and went forward of their own accord, after having given one another the kiss of charity : others received the last blow without speaking or stirring. *Perpetua* fell into the hands of an unskilful gladiator, who pierced her between the ribs so as to give her much unnecessary pain. She cried out ; and then she herself guided his trembling hand to her throat : and thus with the rest she slept in Jesus."—O for a portion of their zeal ! for grace to copy after those, who being fully decided for the Lord Jesus, in the promotion of his cause, "loved not their lives unto death," but willingly gave them up for his sake.

IV. I now call your attention to a few general INFERENCES in relation to the foregoing Discourse.

1. The *accommodating* professor, who by joining in or conniving at the vain and wicked conduct of the ungodly, it may be at the card-table, in the dancing-room, at the theatre, or while hearing a light song, and thus conciliates the esteem of strangers to religion, has little cause of glorying on this account. Alas ! he has succeeded by *denying* his profession, which should have led him not to conform to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of his mind, that he might shew forth the praises of the Lord, and prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. And as he lightly esteems God's glory, so the Lord in like manner will lightly esteem and punish him, since he considers those who are not decidedly *for*, to be *against* him ; opposing the interest of his spiritual kingdom amongst mankind. True, we may fear the loss of reputation, property, liberty, and perhaps of our very lives, should we by a conscientious and zealous profession

fession of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the laws of his kingdom, make the great ones of the earth our enemies : but let us remember there is another and superior *fear* that should influence our conduct. It is expressed by the Lord Jesus Christ, in the following words, " Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul ; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." And again, he asks us, whether we make a wise choice in endeavouring to keep friends with the worldly, saying, " What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?" What temporal honour and advantage will you consider sufficient to make you amends for the loss of eternal life ? And if ye will accommodate matters with the ungodly in order to enjoy their friendship, it must be at the expence of your soul's salvation, for " Whosoever shall be ashamed of (Christ and of his) words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." You hear the terms on which you shake hands with the world, and get them to put up the sword of persecution, drawn against all that live godly in Christ Jesus, into its sheath ; it is to provoke the Lord Jesus to *fight against you with the sword of His mouth*. Ah ! you had much better venture on the sword of the ungodly, than meet the sword of the indignation of the Most High. Lord save us from the fear of man that bringeth a snare.

2. Great is the *difficulty* of curing the disease of an undecided and unstable mind, which difficulty particularly demands our attention in two points of light. *First*, such characters seldom know themselves, being deceived by the momentary warmth by which at times they are animated. *Secondly*, When they are conscious to themselves that they have deserted the worthy cause, they for a season espoused, they wonder at their irresolution, but do not know by what means stability is to be attained. To such persons I would give the following advice. Keep a strict watch over your affections ; humbly confess before Almighty God every wandering from, and coldness in relation to the good cause : you have been led to espouse ; and earnestly pray for a heart renewed

newed in the divine image. By means of this *watchfulness* you detect the wanderings of your heart, and discover the means by which you are in danger of going astray ; whereas those who do not watch against temptation, are frequently surprised into sinful conformities before they are aware of any danger. By means of penitential *confession*, the heart is humbled and broken before God, and those deviations from his law, or want of zeal for his honour, that in times past gave us little or no concern, now become serious matters of grief and shame. And what we are truly sorry for and blush on the account of, we shall certainly endeavour to avoid for the time to come. By means of earnest *prayer*, which is an applying to God through Jesus Christ, for the assistance of his Spirit, we lay hold of the strength of Omnipotence, and are well able to suffer and to perform all the good pleasure of his righteous will. As the spirit of watchfulness, tender-heartedness, and prayer, becomes *habitual* to us, we shall experience increasing ease in glorifying our God below, and finding our way to heaven.

3. There can be no true decision of character, except in that mind which is at *agreement with itself* ; a divided regard ever causing distraction, disagreement, and instability. For instance, if a man be both covetous and extravagant ; both desirous of obliging others, and determined to have his own way ; if he have a measure both of the ambition of a conqueror, and the compassion of a philanthropist in his nature ; if he have the curiosity of an adventurer, and is afraid of fatigue and danger ; it is easy to foresee that his conduct will be very contradictory, leading him the one way or the other according as these different dispositions gain the temporary ascendancy. But when the mind has *one* object in view, on which its *single* regard is fixed, it has a clear discernment of that object, and at all times has every power of the soul ready to promote its valuable interest. The one object that is worthy of this full and universal regard, is the desire that we may live to promote the honour of God our Redeemer. The Lord grant that we may be the decided lovers of his truth, and have our hearts, as David expresses it, (Ps. lxxxvi. 11.) *united* to fear the Lord, *i. e.* all the powers of the soul joined as in *one* principle, and actively

actively engaged to make the truth of God important and glorious in the estimation of mankind. O Lord grant us such a view of thy glory, that our eyes henceforth may be able to discover nothing in the whole compass of created good, worthy to compare with the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. May the grace and glory of the Lord Jesus, appear so transcendently glorious to us, that for the excellency of his knowledge we may count all things but dung and dross, and gladly renounce them all for his sake, saying, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee." Happy, thrice happy, is the man who is in such a case. Happy is the man whose God is the Lord.

4. When we consider what the decided are capable of *accomplishing*; as they have *one* design in view, are not to be *discouraged* by opposition, and consider nothing done to any purpose, till they have *completed* their plan; we have reason, considering the depraved state of human nature, to be thankful that comparatively, so few of the servants of sin are decided characters. Were the great bulk of those deluded people who are living under the influence of covetousness, licentiousness, or ambition, to engage with discretion, warmth, and perseverance, in the promotion of their bad designs, they would mark their passage over the face of the earth with the filth of their abominations; and the blood of their cruelties would every where appear conspicuous. That this is not more generally the case, we owe to the goodness of the Lord, who in his providential rule over the children of men, prevents by various means these dreadful overflowings of abounding iniquity. Oftentimes we see the children of men not of *one* but of *many* minds, drawn this way by their ambition, and that by their covetousness; led in one path by their cruelty, and walking in another to gratify their licentiousness; by this means the evil principle is divided in its energy, and their bad conduct by flowing in different sinful streams, is not so destructive as it would have been had it collected all its force, and moved on in one large body. Frequently the worst of men feel some misgivings of mind, some checks of conscience, some terrors from the Almighty, that alarm their fears and hold them back from the commission

commission of various enormities that their hearts had designed, and they were just about to execute. Others again, who were confirmed in the ways of sin, and were become decided enemies of all righteousness, the Lord in anger against their evil conduct, and in pity to mankind, cuts off in their sin and in their blood, as being vessels of wrath fitted by sin and impenitency for destruction: They have left their memory to be cursed, and their reproach shall not be blotted out; (See Ecclesiasticus. xxiii. 26.) but "they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." Such sinners shall be eternally punished by God, and he will hold them up as warnings to all men who have transgressed against (the Lord); "for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched." (Isa. lxvi. 24.) May we all fear to tread the path of sin, knowing that every transgression tends to corrupt the mind, and confirm us in the practice of evil that leads to everlasting misery.

But let us reflect, that while decided sinners are capable of doing much harm among the children of men, so every decided lover of the Lord Jesus, is as capable by the divine blessing of doing much good; let his talents be ever so small; and his situation ever so humble, in spreading abroad the savour of the knowledge of the Redeemer's name. Therefore let us pray that professors of religion, and we among them, may be valiant for the truth. O Lord grant that it may be said of those who profess love to thee in this day, that they "are called, and chosen, and faithful."

5. As we hope to continue true to our profession of love to the God of our salvation, we must diligently watch against every thing like *self-applause*, since the indulging of such a disposition would prove us undecided for the honour of God, and about to set up an idol, even self-love, as the rival of the Most High; who is a jealous God, and will be satisfied with nothing short of our supreme regard, and solicitous care to glorify his name before the children of men. God is so justly tenacious of his honour, that his anger burned, even against his servant Moses, when he did not express due concern to lead the minds of the Israelitish nation up to God, as the author of all their blessings; and for this thing Moses was not permitted to conduct the people he had brought

brought out of Egypt into the promised land, but died on this side Jordan according to the word of the Lord. God says, Thou shalt not go unto the land which I give to the children of Israel, "Because ye transgressed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin;" which transgression is said to be, "because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel." (Deut. xxxii. 51.) If Jehovah was so displeased at his favourite servant for the least deficiency in seeking the honour of his name; sure it is, he will be angry with and destroy us, should we so far forget ourselves as to seek our own honour and be forgetful of his glory. That we may serve him fully, love him supremely, and sink into nothing before him, let us ever keep in mind that from him comes all our knowledge of divine truth, every gracious desire that we feel, and every degree of power to perform his good pleasure; and that it is our duty, safety, and comfort in all things to come out of self, and grow up into Christ, since "of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." Should any one who is truly decided for the glory of God, ever find it with St Paul, necessary to say "I laboured more abundantly than they all," with that great and decided apostle, they would add with unfeigned humility and lively gratitude, "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." With the living intelligences, and holy elders, who cast their crowns of glory before the throne of the Almighty, may we say, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created."

FINIS.

* * The Author trusts that the little alteration made in the length and number of the lines on each page, will be acceptable to the purchasers of both Editions, as it renders the 12mo. more legible, and gives the 8vo. a better margin; it also considerably lightens the labours of the Press.

THE
CHURCH OF THYATIRA;

IN TWO PARTS.

Part First.

A CRITICAL AND PRACTICAL
LECTURE ON REVEL. II. 18—29.

Part Second.

A LECTURE
ON CHURCH DISCIPLINE,

(THIS CHURCH BEING LAX THEREIN.)

SHewing

THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE, AND WHO
ARE THE PROPER SUBJECTS OF THE GOSPAL SACRAMENTS.

By SAMUEL KITTLE,
Minister of the Gospel.

“That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of
“God, which is the church of the living God.” 1 Tim. iii. 15.

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CHURCH OF THYATIRA,

Part First.

OR,

A LECTURE ON REVELATION,

CHAP. II. 15.—28.

And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write ; these things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass : I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works ; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication ; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death ; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts : and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak ; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations : And he shall rule them with a rod of iron ; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers : even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star.

IN lecturing on this Epistle, I shall attend to the usual order, and explain, &c.

I. The *representation* of the Lord Jesus.

II. The *character*, &c. of the church.

III. The *exhortation* given them.

IV. The *inducements* held out to them.

I. The emblematical *representation* of the Lord Christ in this Epistle consists of two parts, and relates to his *eyes*, which are compared to a *flame of fire*, and his *feet*, which are said to resemble *fine brass*. Both these representations respect the state of this church, and turn our attention to the particular manner in which the Lord would prove himself officially related to this society of professed Christians.

I. *These things saith the son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire.* In these words, the Lord Jesus, the glorified Head of the church, reminds his professed disciples of the divinity of his person, claiming to himself the title of the Son of God, as belonging to him by propriety of *nature*, he being "the brightness of his (Father's) glory, and the express image of his person," One with the Father, (See John x. 30.) hence what is said concerning the Father, is true of him also, as being of the same *essence*. As it respects his official character as Head of the church, his eyes, *like flames of fire*, run to and fro through the earth, beholding the evil and the good that is done among the children of men in general ; and especially attending to every transaction among his professing people. Their works, their words, yea their very thoughts, are all known to Him, for of Him as *Head* of all, it is expressly said by the apostle, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight : but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Our eyes, which can only see the surface of things, and can take in but a small prospect, have no power to see at all but as the light shines to discover unto us a few surrounding objects ; but the eyes of the Lord Jesus reach to every place however distant, and shine into it however dark. None can hide themselves from his Spirit, or go from his presence, the darkness hideth not from him, but illuminated by the bright emissions of uncreated light that beams forth from his eyes of fire, the night to his observations shineth as the day, and every place and every creature

creature in heaven, earth, and hell, stands open to the view of his omniscience. Thus he assures the minister and members of this defective church, that he was intimately acquainted with all their persons, and with every one of their transactions.—O that every Christian society and every professor of religion may be solemnly and constantly impressed with this truth, “Thou God seest me;” then, with him at our right hand, we should not be moved, for temptations would lose their charms, and difficulties be disarmed of their terrors, and we go straight forward in the path of piety, perfecting righteousness in the fear of the Lord. But alas! for want of thus realizing the presence of our God, not a danger or difficulty presents itself, but has some power against us for harm. “Lord increase our faith.” O give us all to endure “as seeing Him who is invisible.”

2. *And his feet are like fine brass.* By the *feet*, in the metaphorical language of scripture, we are to understand the *goings* or *conduct* of men, and the *orderings* and *disposings* of Providence. In this sense of *ordering the conduct*, David in the cxixth Psalm, verses 59 and 60, makes use of the metaphor *feet*, saying, “I thought on my ways, and turned my *feet* unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not, to keep thy commandments.” God’s law is a *path*, and the *feet* of the obedient walk therein. Let each of us pray, saying, O Lord be gracious unto me, “Set my *feet* upon a rock, and establish my goings.” The following passage relates to the providential goodness of God to Israel his people, whom he delivered from Egyptian bondage, and conducted safely to the land of promise. “Thy *way* is in the sea, and thy *path* in the great waters, and thy *footsteps* are not known. Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.” And while such figurative expressions are made use of to point out the dispensations of Divine Providence in general, they are particularly adapted to express the providential rule of Him, who in the body which he has assumed and taken into inseparable union with his divine nature, manifests himself as the great Governor of the church and the world, in which capacity “He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his *feet*,” i.e. till he hath brought them to submit to his rule and authority. All who oppose him must
be

be subdued by him according to the prediction of his success against his enemies by ISAIAH, (lxiii. 3—6.) who foreseeing his victory says concerning him, "I have trodden the wine-press alone; for I will tread them (my enemies) in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and I will bring down their strength to the earth." That he may be able to trample on all the power of the enemy, his feet are not merely said to be shod with military greaves, by means of which they may be secured from receiving injury from the missive weapons that may be thrown in their way; but they are spoken of under the figure of pillars of *solid metal*, that are incapable of being injured by any thing which they press upon, or strike against. The *power* of the providential rule of the Lord Christ is evidently what is intended by this representation of his *feet*, and receives illustration from the vision that *Nebuchadnezzar* had of the four great monarchies that should successively subdue and govern the earth before the setting up of the kingdom of MESSIAH. The last of these kingdoms, viz. the *Roman*, is pointed out by the legs of the image which were of iron, and the feet part of iron and part of clay, which legs of iron showed that it should subdue and break all opposing powers in pieces, while the mixture of iron and clay in the feet, pointed out the divisions which should take place in that kingdom, and cause it to have the feebleness of clay, mixed with the strength of iron therein. (See Dan. ii. 40. &c.) But there is no *weakness* in the feet of Christ, they are strong and solid, all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth. (Mat. 28. 18.) "And he hath on his vesture, and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." There is none like unto Him, none besides himself, who is able to say, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Thus he informed the church at *Thyatira*, that as he was OMNISCIENT to discover every irregularity among them; so also, he was OMNIPOTENT to punish all workers of iniquity. Who can escape his *knowledge*? Who can resist his *power*? If all created beings, were to league together, to arm and strengthen themselves against him, He would beat them small as the dust of the earth, and stamp them as the mire of the street. O sinner! and you that are at ease in Zion; hear, fear, and turn unto the Lord; lest when

when the great day of his wrath shall come, ye be constrained to call on the mountains and rocks to fall on you, and to hide you ; from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

His feet being compared not merely to *brass*, for stability, as has been observed, but also to *fine brass*, (for remarks on the Χαλκολιβανον, Chalkolibanon, of the ancients, see *Lectures* on Rev. ch. i. ver. 15.) is not without its signification, which I consider to be ; that all his ways are *true* and *righteous*, such as the well informed judgment of every rational creature must approve : for whether we consider the judgments he brings upon the inhabitants of the earth, in the course of his providential rule ; or the punishments he shall inflict upon the wicked, when the great day of his wrath is come, all heaven's host unite to celebrate him, saying, " We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, who art, and wast, and art to come ; because thou hast reigned." There shall be no dissenting voice to that song, in which is ascribed " Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for *true* and *righteous* are his judgments." And thus saith POOLE in his *Commentary*, " The comparing of his (Christ's) feet to fine brass, seemeth to signify both the *purity* and *holiness* of his ways, and methods of providence, and also his firmness and steadiness in them." As none can resist the power of the Lord Christ, so none can find *fault* with his administration. The vessels of mercy will praise his love, and the vessels of wrath shall be obliged to acknowledge his justice, and at the end of every sigh they shall heave in that black world of despair, this tormenting thought will present itself, "*true* and *righteous* are his judgments." O sinner ! should you fall under the displeasure of the Lord Christ, as you certainly will if you turn not unto him that you may live, no hand will have power sufficient to afford you help, if Omnipotence is your foe ; and no heart will retain tenderness enough to shew you pity, when the Lord Jesus the righteous Judge and merciful Saviour, casts you off as accursed. O call upon him while mercy is to be found, seek him and he will be gracious, and you shall find him strong to deliver and ready to save.

II. The *character* of this church, is of a *mixed* kind, being commendable for many things, which the Lord Jesus enumerates, ver. 19, but at the same time it is censurable on account of the undue and scandalous lenity they showed towards a certain vile and fascinating impostor, v. 20.

(I.) The commendable part of their character, is described in the following words, *I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.* Of this catalogue of excellencies, I understand the first sentence, *I know thy works*, to signify in general the full acquaintance that Christ had with every part of their conduct. (But see GENERAL OBSERVATIONS, § 4. The signification of the constantly repeated phrase, *I know thy works*.) I shall therefore dismiss it, and proceed to consider the particulars enumerated.

1. Honourable testimony is borne to their *Charity*, (*αγαπη*, *agape*, *love*, the same word as is used, 1 Cor. xiii. throughout,) *Christian love*, the tender and warm affection they felt for the brethren, the good will they bore, and active benevolence they manifested towards all mankind; a blessed fruit and proof of the love of God reigning in their hearts. (For instances of the *love* and *benevolence* of the primitive Christians, see Lecture on the Church of SMYRNA, *Part Second*, § 2.) Love is characteristic of the new creature, for by nature men are *hateful and hating one another*; ever making war upon one another's property, liberty, and lives; for, being under the influence of him who was a murderer from the beginning, they can view human misery without compassion, yea, feast themselves on groans and bloodshed. (See Church of SMYRNA, *Part Second*, iii. § 4.) We should bless God for every principle of benevolence that takes root in the affections of mankind; and offer up our prayers that the love of Christ may reign in our hearts.

2. The Lord is graciously pleased to accept their *service*; the zeal they manifested to promote the interest of his kingdom, and spread abroad the savour of the knowledge of his name. It appears that the Christians of Thyatira had learned of the Spirit to pray, saying "*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it*

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is in heaven;" and that their talents, their property, and their influence were employed in order to be useful to their neighbours, and to all mankind, as God should grant them his assistance and crown their labours with success. The glorified Saviour, by his commendation of their pious zeal, proves that he is not unrighteous to forget the works and labours of love, which his people show towards his name, and in behalf of his cause. Lord grant that our works also may be such as have a tendency to honour thy name, and promote the welfare of society. Sure as the love of Christ dwells in our hearts, it will constrain us to let our light shine, and seek to bring others to the knowledge of the truth, "because (under this influence) we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they (who) live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again," of whom it is said, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." While Sunday Schools want teachers; while Tract and Bible Societies, &c. call for our aid; while there is sin and ignorance in the world; no servant of God, be his talent ever so small, should hide it in a napkin, but, on the contrary, he should use it for the honour of the Giver, whose cause is often promoted by instruments and means which the world holds in contempt.

3. They are also commended for their *Faith*, by which I presume we are to understand, their clear conception of, and esteem for the momentous truths of the everlasting gospel; as of the fall of man, the redemption by Christ Jesus, the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, the hope of eternal glory, &c. Evangelical faith is called *precious*, and truly precious it is, both as it brings present peace, and secures future blessedness; and a growing faith is *commendable*, as the faith of the gospel is as efficacious in sanctifying the Will and the Affections, as it is in enlightening the Understanding. The influence of the Affections (which may be considered as so many modifications of the Will,) upon the judgment of rational beings, is referred to in different parts of divine writ; I beg leave to call the attention of my readers to the following passages. "As they (the heathen philosophers,) did not like to retain God in their knowledge,

knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, (to a darkened and perverted understanding, which suffered them to approve of, and) to do those things which are not convenient." And again, "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie; (false and licentious doctrines,) that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but (instead of believing, *embracing* or closing in with the truth, they) had (or took) pleasure in unrighteousness." Thus it evidently appears, that the unbelief of those people originated in the alienation of their *affections* from God, and therefore it was without excuse, and the highest aggravation of their sin, since by this means they became hardened therein. As unbelief is of so bad a tendency, so the faith of the gospel is excellent and commendable in the sight of God, as tending to purify the heart, and sanctify the conversation. May our hearts also be purified by faith; God himself fulfilling in us "all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power."

4. The Lord commends them for their *patience*, i. e. (as explained in Lecture on the Church of *EPHESUS*) their patiently and perseveringly sustaining the various acts of persecution they were exposed to for his name's sake. As the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, he doth not promise to reward his followers with the wealth, honours, or pleasures of this life; but with the communications of his precious grace, and the joys, honours, and riches of his heavenly kingdom. On the contrary, the god of this world offers *present* and visible good, showing to mankind the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them, and asserting that all these things are delivered into his power to give them to whomsoever he will; he adds to each soul whom he assails with temptation, as he did of old to the Lord Christ, "If thou therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be thine;" thou shalt have thy heart's desire of all the world is capable of affording. When the disciples of Christ enjoy the good things of life, and bless God for them, the worldly will not be persuaded but that their esteem is for the gifts and not for the Giver, but when they follow him through *dishonour*, as well as through honour, and willingly

lingly suffer the *loss* of all things for his sake ; the ungodly marvel at the conduct of the pious, and are compelled to allow, that they bear great affection to him whom they worship ; since neither reproach, sufferings, nor death, are able to make them desert his interest. The *patience* of the saints was a means in the commencement of the gospel, of converting many spectators to the faith of Jesus. Lord grant that we also, being blessed with a principle of grace within ; when persecution shall arise because of the word, may evidence to all, the love we bear to thy name, by “ enduring hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.”

5. Honourable mention is made a second time of their *works*, concerning which the Lord testifies, *the last to be more than the first* : from which we learn that their *works* of faith, and *labour of love*, had suffered no declension since they first set out in the ways of religion, but that on the contrary, their pious zeal to extend his kingdom was on the increase. Happy people ! who acted in so *commendable* and *rational* a manner. Thus their consistent conduct was calculated to honour the Saviour’s name, as it proved to mankind that they had found no occasion to repent of the choice they had made, but increased in the esteem they bore to their divine Master, and his holy precepts. For while those who apostatize from Christ, or become lax in his cause, declare they are weary of his service ; a steady perseverance in his ways, and increasing zeal to promote the interest of his kingdom, evidence that our cool and matured judgment esteems him as the best of Masters, and his work as the most honourable of employments. May we also by steady perseverance in the ways of religion, prove to all men that Christ is precious in our esteem. Again, since he whom we yield ourselves to obey, is the fountain of knowledge, comfort, and purity, nothing is more probable than that the longer any serve him in the gospel, the more they will become attached to his interest. By continuing in his service, the *wisdom* of his laws will appear more conspicuous unto us, the *comforts* of his Spirit will more frequently have refreshed us, and *virtuous habits* will have gathered strength by practice. God grant that living under the influence of his Spirit, and walking uprightly before him, we may grow
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wiser, happier, holier, and more zealous, and prove that to love our God, and to do his will, is 'nature all, and all delight.'

So far we are presented with an amiable portrait, in which Christian benevolence, zeal, faith, fortitude, and abounding acts of piety, form prominent features ; but alas ! the face of this church has one sad deformity, which I must now proceed to turn your attention towards. The view may indeed be painful to contemplation, but I trust, by God's blessing, it is calculated to become profitable to many Christian churches.

(II.) The Lord reproves the irregularity of this church in the following words, *Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols ; and I gave her space to repent, and she repented not.* In elucidating these words, I shall observe the following order : 1. Make some inquiry concerning this offending person called *Jezebel*. 2. Show the *aggravation* of her offence. 3. Consider the sinful *connivance* at those things, of which the office-bearers of this church were guilty.

1. It being hard to determine who is designed by *that woman Jezebel*, I shall lay before my readers a selection of different opinions, and leave them to judge for themselves. POOLE'S opinion (see his *Commentary*) is, that there was some famous heretical strumpet in this church, which the governors did not restrain and cast out of their communion, which is the thing Christ had against this church, and the officers thereof. Dr SAMUEL CRADOCK, in his *Exposition on the Revelation*, appears to be of the same sentiment. " It is observed (says he) in ancient history, that there was scarce ever any heresy but had some *woman* or other for a *promoter* of it ; and such often took on them the names of *prophetesses*. SIMON MAGUS had his *Helena* ; CARPOCRATES, his *Marcellina* ; APELLES his *Philomena* ; MONTANUS had two women called prophetesses, *Priscilla* and *Maximilla* ; and *Justin* frequently mentions one *Lucilla*, who was a great ring-leader of the DONATISTS."—MILNER,

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(vol. i. p. 260 of his History of the Church of Christ,) mentions two women of Asia, who were possessed by Satan with a pretended spirit of prophecy, and spoke foolish and fanatical things. They gloried in their own supposed superior sanctity and happiness and were deluded with the most flattering expectations.—Few of the Phrygians were seduced, though they took upon them to revile every church under heaven which did not pay homage to their pretended inspirations. The faithful throughout Asia in frequent synods examined and condemned the heresy.” FIRMILIAN, Bishop of Cappadocia (*ibid.* p. 443.) adverts to the case of a woman, who “had professed herself a prophetess, and for a long time had deceived the brethren with her extatic raptures, till one of the exorcists (a caster out of evil spirits,) confuted her pretensions.” These women, it is true, did not seduce their followers to idolatry and fornication, as did the *Jezebel* of the text, but like her they pretended to prophesy, and despised all who would not receive their ravings as divine inspirations. Thus, as *Milner* observes, these facts tend to show, “that delusions have ever been raised by Satan to disgrace the work of God.” Mrs TRIMMER, in her *Bible*, says, “*Jezebel* means the sect of the Nicolaitanes, and her fornication means false doctrine.” I shall close this selection of opinions with a quotation from SCOTT.

“Whether the expression, *That woman Jezebel*, &c., is to be understood *literally* or *figuratively*, is not agreed. From the reading in some manuscripts, it hath been thought, that the wife of the presiding minister was meant; that she had obtained great influence in the affairs of the church, and made a bad use of it; that she pretended to prophetic gifts, and under that sanction propagated her abominable principles; and though her conduct was disapproved by the sounder part of the church, yet no proper decision was used in censuring her, or preventing the mischiefs she occasioned. Yet the figurative meaning seems more suited to the style and manner of this book: and in this sense we may understand it to denote a company of persons of the spirit and character of Jezebel, within the church, under one principal deceiver, (as the Roman Antichrist is represented by

by the emblem of an abandoned harlot;) as *Jezebel*, a zealous idolater, being married to the king of Israel, contrary to the divine law, used all her influence to seduce the Israelites from the worship of JEHOVAH, into idolatry; with which the vilest licentiousness was connected; and this served to increase the temptations; thus these persons having, perhaps through the fault of the pastors, and members of the church, found admission among them; and by their artifices and blandishments attached a party to their cause: employed their whole influence to draw men from the pure religion of Christ, into carnal and spiritual fornication and adultery, and to poison their minds with their abominable doctrines; yet had they not been duly censured and opposed, and it is probable, that neither the fatal tendency of their opinions nor the atrociousness of their conduct, had been fully understood, till this message was sent."

The only observation I shall make on this subject is, that women are capable of doing much good or harm in the world and in the church, according as they act under the influence of a good or evil spirit: and if a woman is meant by the name *Jezebel*, I conceive her sin was, that she yielded herself up to the spirit of delusion, and licentiousness, and pretended to be a prophetess in order to support her abominations. These facts should make women of strong passions, very careful how they suffer themselves to be led away by every warm impression, lest they should become missionaries for Satan, before they are aware of the delusion: but I dare not say, that a pious woman who is no pretender to a prophetic spirit, should be forbid to admonish another, and endeavour, according to the instructions of God's word, to do good to her own sex. The aged Christian women may do much good in the church, by teaching "the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children," &c. (Titus ii. 4, 5.)

Whoever was the promoter of this corrupt system, it appears to have found too many zealous supporters in the church of Thyatira, for this doctrine is spoken of as held by many in the 24th verse, where it is called the depths of Satan, as they speak. Her sinful accomplices, called *her children* (v. 23.) were indefatigable in

in spreading abroad her errors, extolling the wonderful revelations *she* was favoured with, and representing all that differed from her sentiments, as being mere babes in religion, walking in darkness and bondage. Thus they *first* excited the curiosity of all unto whom they had access, by means of their high pretensions: *Secondly*, they confounded the understandings of ordinary Christians, by the abstruseness of their revelations: and to *crown the whole*, they fawned upon, and flattered all that would hearken to them, into a persuasion that they evidenced superior intellectual power to the bulk of the society of which they made a part; till the poor empty creatures began to pride themselves upon their growing understandings, and imagined they were beginning to enjoy deliverance from popular prejudices, of which they proceeded to give proof by joining their boasting seducers in acts of idolatry and fornication. In like manner numbers are deluded in this day by the vain pretensions of the designing and enthusiastic, first into self-conceit, and then into licentious practices. Lord save us from the wiles of Satan, especially when he attacks us transformed into an angel of light, and extols Christian liberty, in order to make us the servants of unrighteousness.

2. The *aggravation* of her offence, is said to be, that though God gave her space to repent of her fornication: yet she repented not, but went on in her sinful course of seducing others to licentiousness and idolatry. It was abounding clemency in the Lord, thus to grant a respite, and afford an opportunity of repentance, for according to the law of Moses the punishment of idolatrous seducers was not to be delayed at all, but they were to be *instantly* put to death for their wicked designs. (See Deut. xiii. 1. 11) The Christians indeed neither had, nor was it designed they ever should have, legal power, to put any one to death for offences purely of a religious nature; but then, the Lord himself as the great Head of the church and the Governor of the world, miraculously interposed as he saw fit, and by his outstretched arm punished his enemies. Thus, by his immediate power, *Ananias*, and *Sapphira* his wife, were both instantly struck dead, for lying to the Holy Ghost, (See Acts v. 5. 10.) and Jezebel and her associates deserved as sudden destruction; but the Lord as the Sovereign of the universe had a right if he pleased to sus-
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pend the blow, and he did suspend it in behalf of these offenders, yet they went on rebelling against his laws, and seducing his servants, as if they defied his wrath and despised his clemency. When mercy is slighted, and God's forbearance abused, and made fresh occasion of sin, it proves the rebel to be confirmed in his wickedness, and ripe for destruction; yet alas! how many such vile characters are to be found in every age, and every country. Stop reader! and ask yourself, Do I bear any resemblance to such characters? If you do, admire God's forbearing mercy, fear his gathering wrath, loathe your sinful conduct, and turn to him by timely repentance.

3. While Jezebel and her followers were thus corrupting the members of this Christian society, the officers of the church took no active steps to suppress the growing evil, but tamely permitted these wolves to ravage the fold of Christ. On this account the Lord reproved them, through the person of their minister, saying, *I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest, &c.* (But See PART SECOND, for the evil of being *lax in Church Discipline.*)

III. The *Exhortation* given to this church relates, *first*, to Jezebel and her adherents: and, *secondly*, to the *uncorrupted* members of the said society.

1. The wicked Jezebel and her followers are called upon to *repent*, for the Lord, by threatening to punish them, *except they repent of their deeds*, intimates, that he is still willing to extend his mercy unto them, provided they do but turn to him with contrition of soul. He, at the same time, gives them to understand, that he expects his past tenderness towards them on the one hand, and his present reproof on the other, should bring them to repentance *speedily*. Ungrateful and hardened must they have been, who remained unmoved by this mixture of mercy and reproof. When the Lord bears with sinners, it is not because he doth not know their wickedness, doth not hate their abominations, or is not able to execute his righteous displeasure; but it is in order to grant them space for repentance. Whoever thou art who readest these pages, beware that thou do not increase the number of those who "*despise* the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering: not knowing, that the good-

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ness of God leadeth thee to repentance." And however evil thy conduct has been, thou who feelest thy relents to kindle, give not way to despondency, but take encouragement and turn to the Lord, who is thus leading thee to repentance, in order that thou mayest obtain salvation.

But sinner turn *speedily* to God, who rebukes thee for these irregularities, and calls thee to humble thyself before him. Know, O man, that thou hast not the monopoly of grace, cannot enlighten thy mind, and soften thy heart, just as and when thou pleasest; sin is of a blinding and captivating nature, and the more thou givest way unto it, the less able thou art to discover its deformity or break from its entanglements. The evils that shock the mind at the first interview, are less disgustful at a second; soon they become familiar unto us, and at length lovely to our depraved apprehension. Consider it then, as an infinite mercy, that God at any time by his word and Spirit alarms thy fears, shows thee the deformity of sin, and calls thee to repentance; then is the time for thee to break from sin, and turn to him who still waits to be gracious. But see that at such times thou offer not despite to his spirit, lest he give thee up to thy heart's lust, and forsake thee, saying, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." Oh! that dreadful word, let him *alone*: any thing were tolerable but that, for it is a consigning of us over to the dominion of sin and Satan; a dreadful earnest of the final sentence, "Depart ye cursed."

The church-officers by the reproof of the Lord, are also called upon to enforce the wholesome discipline of his house, that they may become co-workers with him in purifying the church, and recovering those out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. (But See Part Second. On *Church Discipline*.)

2. The uncorrupted part of this church are exhorted by the Lord to stand fast in the blessed liberty of the gospel. (See ver. 24 and 25.) But unto you, the pastor and pious office-bearers, I say, and unto the rest of the Christian society in *Thyatira*, even unto as many as have not been seduced by this doctrine, and which have not known, (have been opposed to) the depths of satan as they

they speak ; I will put or lay upon you none other burden, but that which ye have already taken up in my fear, hold fast till I come. The deluded followers of Jezebel boasted of that depth of knowledge, by means of which they rioted in licentiousness, and called it gospel liberty ; but the Lord congratulates his faithful people on their happiness of having escaped the dangerous snare, the doctrines alluded to being no less then the *deep-laid* plots of the *wicked-one* *, in order to pollute and destroy the souls of God's professing people. Happy are those Christians, who, living in habitual communion with heaven, have their spiritual senses so improved, as to be enabled, by a kind of mental taste to distinguish the unsavouriness of temptation, however disguised and recommended. God grant that it may always be said in respect of *our* adherence to the good-shepherd, " The sheep follow him : for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him ; for they know not the voice of strangers." As their safety and comfort both depended on their following Him fully, the Lord Christ exhorts them to perseverance in their steady regard to his precepts until he should come to receive them to his glory. And because these sensualists, represented the way of holiness as uncomfortable and grievous to walk in, He adds for their reproof, and for the encouragement of his faithful followers, that he had no design of imposing upon them any additional task, but only that they should continue to bear that *easy yoke and light burden*, (see *Mat. xi. 30.*) under which they

* "Some are of opinion that by the *depths of Satan* are meant certain secret books, in which were contained the mysteries of the erroneous sects mentioned in this and in some other of these epistles. It is true, that many of the early erroneous sects had certain secret mysteries, which they concealed from all, excepting their confirmed members ; such secret mysteries are a sure proof of the falsehood of the secret doctrines, for truth is not afraid of the light, and is never hurt by it. Men love darkness rather than light only when their tenets and their deeds are evil.

I am of opinion, that men are said to know the depths of Satan, when by his temptation they are brought to *commit sins and crimes under the mask of religion and law* : It was thus that Jezebel and the elders and nobles of Israel unjustly took away the life and vineyard of Naboth. See *1 Kings xxi. 7. 14.* to which, in my opinion, reference is made here." (Dr Bruce Johnston.)

they had so long rejoiced. * While those who live at a distance from the Lord, and are destitute of the communications of his grace in the ordinances of religion, think him a *hard Master*, and say concerning his service, *what a weariness it is*, his people who walk in the light of his countenance say, *Oh how I love the laws of the Lord!* "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness." Lord bless us with thy *free Spirit*, that we may find thy service perfect liberty, and cleave to thee with full purpose of heart. God grant us, "that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life."

I must not neglect to call your attention to that part of v. 26. which bears the force of an exhortation, calling the pious of this society to *keep his works unto the end*. Respecting this exhortation to practical holiness, I beg leave to observe, that it was very suitable to their case, considering the temptations they were exposed to of being less attentive than hitherto they had been to *works of righteousness*, by means of the subtlety of licentious professors, who boasted of being completely holy in the righteousness of Christ, and censured them as seeking justification by the works of the law, for thus they might argue; that if their works were *necessary* to salvation; then they made them *meritorious*, and put them in the place of the Saviour; but as for them, they rejoiced in being delivered from any dependance upon *works*, and were content to be righteous in Christ alone. Whatever these sensualists might think of themselves, they were destitute of gospel faith, and had not the love of God in them, *but their belly* (their carnal desires, &c.) *was their God*; and if they continued to live as they had lived of late, *their end would be destruction*. (See Phil. iii. 19.) Regard them not, saith the Lord, but as ye have received from me a principle of grace, see that you live in the

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* Some writers, indeed, consider afflictive providences to be signified by the word *burden*, and think that the reference is to the judgments threatened to Ahab and Jezebel, called (2 Kings ix. 25.) *his burden*. In this sense, the passage conveys a promise of deliverance from sufferings, as opposed to the anguish that should be poured out upon Jezebel and her accomplices.

the practice of holiness, for "herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be (acknowledged for) my disciples;" go on, therefore, *keeping my works unto the end*. It is the device of satan to oppose works of righteousness to gospel faith, whereas they are related to each other as the *fruit* is to the *tree* that bears it; or the *effect* to the cause producing the same. May the good Lord save us from *legality* on the one hand, and from *licentiousness* on the other, and help us humbly to depend upon his promised aid, and to cleave to him with full purpose of heart.

IV. The *Inducements* held out to this church are :

(I.) Such as are calculated to produce gracious alarm in the mind of the wicked Jezebel and her corrupt adherents. *Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and the heart; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.* These words are designed to lead those, concerning whom they are spoken, to repentance, for still the Lord (as was before observed,) waited to be gracious unto them; but to those who repented not, they contain a threatening of grievous *affliction*; *destroying* judgments; and shameful *exposure*.

1. *I will cast her into a bed, &c.* A *bed* is metaphorically used to designate a state of affliction so great and weakening as to force the sufferer to take to his bed, as being unable to bear up any longer under the weight of his afflictions; there is, moreover, a beautiful *allusion* to, and a *contrast* with the bed of fornication, in which (v. 20.) Jezebel is accused of having rioted in forbidden pleasures. Into this *bed* of affliction God threatens to cast her and her licentious adherents, who remained impenitent in spite of his admonitions. There they should endure *great tribulation*, view their sufferings as the effects of God's righteous *anger*, and be *confounded* at their folly in hearkening to the voice of temptation. Thus, every licentious professor may expect that his sin will find him out sooner or later. On the bed of affliction, and in the time of sore trouble; such characters are led to com-
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pare past enjoyments with present sufferings, and how does the recollection augment their misery! Then they feel that past excesses have at once procured them these sorrows, and so despoiled them of fortitude as to render every thing like suffering an intolerable burden. In all their distresses, they feel the hand of God presses them sore, his indignation gives a sting to their troubles that pierces them to the very soul, for Oh! they have abused his mercy and done despite to his Spirit, and now they fear he has cast them off for ever. Now they look with other eyes upon their sins than they did when seduced by them to forsake the good ways of the Lord, and are amazed they should ever have been so infatuated as to love deformity and grasp at vanity. Lord help us to remember that "the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord;" and that thou wilt measure out to all those impenitent sinners who have lived in honour and delicacy, a due proportion of *sorrow* and *torment*. (See Rev. xviii. 7.)

2. In opposition to their vain-glorious boast of *increasing numbers*, the Lord threatens to *cut off* the deluded proselytes to this iniquitous system by some terrible and sweeping judgment, which, like the *first-born* of death, (See Job xviii. 13.) eager and strong to devour, should prey upon them, wresting from the promoters of this bad interest the choice fruits of their labour, and leaving them without hopes of ever more rising into respectability. *I*, saith the Lord, *will kill her children with death*, and she, like a disconsolate mother, shall lament the loss of her posterity. Perhaps this threatening may have a reference to the terrible destruction with which the children of the ambitious *Ahab*, king of Israel, and his idolatrous wife *Jezebel*, were cut off by the sanguinary *Jehu's* instrumentality. (See 2 Kings x.) How soon, and in what manner, the judgments of God were poured out upon the corrupt professors to whom this epistle was at first addressed, is not clear from ecclesiastical history; but it is well known, that church discipline being more and more relaxed, and corruptions increasing amongst professed Christians, the Lord at length gave up his inheritance into the hands of the Mahometans, who sweeping whole provinces where Christianity had been established,

established, as with the besom of destruction, cut off the memorial of many corrupt sects and parties ; (but see Lectures on the *Geography* of the Seven Churches.) This judgment was evidently of God, who gave up the licentious to destruction, and covered the ringleaders of many flourishing parties with confusion. This threatening, and these facts, afford an instructive lesson to all who are tempted to take the lead in party disputes, and who seek to strengthen their interest by granting unwarrantable liberties to their followers. They may hope by this means to increase the number of those who shall be called by their name ; but God will cut off and scatter their admirers, calling to the leaders of the diminished party to lament the loss of their adherents. *

3: They were times of prevailing idolatry, the great men and the magistrates of their city supported this long established system, hence the corrupt followers of the idolatrous and licentious Jezebel, might hope by their *accommodating* spirit, to secure the favourable regard of those in power. But in opposition to the honour they sought from men, and the safety they hoped to enjoy, by means of this their vain pretension to a more enlightened understanding, and a more liberal mind than their fellow professors enjoyed ; the Lord threatened to *expose* their principles to shame, and to punish them for their iniquities, *All the churches*

* As some of my readers may be inclined to consider the *children* of Jezebel literally, I have added an account of the correspondence between GREGORY first Bishop of Rome, and BRUNEHALT queen of *Austrasia* or *Burgundy*, a division of the French monarchy. She was an ambitious dissolute woman ; yet in that age of superstition, she endeavoured to impose both on herself and on the world by an appearance of piety. Gregory having represented to her with much earnestness, many irregular proceedings in ecclesiastical affairs, finding that his remonstrances had little effect, he urges her still more strongly on the same subject, and observes the probability of divine vengeance overtaking her family, if she corrected not these enormities. It is remarkable, that this wicked woman was afterwards put to a cruel death, and that her descendants were slain or expelled. (See MILNER's *Church History*, vol. iii. Cent. 6.) Such judgments, whether inflicted upon sinful sects or wicked families, are designed for admonitions unto all who hear concerning them ; even as was the destruction that came upon the old testament *Jezebel*.

churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts ; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. Hence I gather, that they pretended *principle* for their corrupt practices, but the *flaming eyes* of the Lord Jesus, which pierce into the hidden things of darkness, perceived that it was the love of worldly honour and carnal pleasures that induced them to make this profession ; and he disclosed his sentiments respecting them by the manner in which he treated them, giving them up to be destroyed by his sore judgments, which he would not have permitted had they not been *reprobate silver*, (See Jer. vi. 30.) *i. e.* men professing his name but denying his truth. They hoped for *security* from the favour of the *great*, but the Lord informs them *He* would take vengeance upon their inventions, and punish them *according to their works*, recompensing to each in proportion to the dishonour they had brought upon his name, by means of their sinful conformity to the reigning evils he came into the world to destroy. Thus his *eyes of flame* that discerned would make manifest their shame, and his *feet of pure brass*, would trample them down as the objects of his displeasure.—So will the Lord bring every evil principle to *light*, however carefully it may be concealed, or glossed over with specious pretensions ; and so will he *punish* every transgressor of his holy commandments although earth and hell should unite for their defence. (See. Isaiah xxviii. 18.)

(II.) The *uncorrupted* members of this Christian Society are encouraged to hold fast their pious regard to the evangelical law of love ; by the promise of the rewards of glory, set forth under figures, particularly adapted to their state as members of the church of Thyatira.

1. The *first* promise is, *He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations : (and he shall rule them with a rod of iron : as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers :) even as I received of my Father.* v. 26, 27. In these words, which are a reference to the prophecy of *Messiah's* victory over the enemies of his kingdom, (Ps. ii.) his faithful people are told they shall reap the benefit of his triumph. The pious members of this church, no doubt, la-
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mented the insults offered unto their divine Master in his cause, both by an unbelieving world, and also by the unworthy members of their own community, and in their endeavours to promote the honours of the Saviour's name, they had met with but little success, and were exposed to frequent reproach, that tended greatly to their discouragement. The Lord, therefore, knowing the state of their mind, bids them be of good cheer, assuring them that they were engaged in favour of that interest which must ultimately prevail; and moreover, that as they were lovers of his cause they should share in his glory. The time was fast approaching when they should see him finally victorious over all the power of the enemy, whom He would break to pieces, like as a *rod of iron* dashes a potter's vessel to *shivers*. Then, they would receive from him *power* and a kingdom, even as he had *received* of his *Father*. Then, they who found their advice slighted here, should sit with him on his throne, and join with him in pronouncing the authoritative word by which he would condemn the ungodly. (See Mat. xix. 28. with 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.) This was enough to encourage them to *stand firm* in their profession; and from this promise to God's faithful people, we learn, that the true lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ, are so fully interested in behalf of the support of his honour in the advancement of his kingdom, that every other consideration gives way before it, not excepting the ties of relationship and churchmembership; for even against the ungodly among these, the pious will shortly join with Christ, in passing the sentence that dooms them to destruction. Oh think of this, ye who enjoy the kindness of virtuous friends; *now* they watch over you for your good, they exhort you with much affection to turn to the Lord, they pray for you with much fervour, and often with many tears, since there is hope you may be reclaimed from the error of your ways; but when the day of judgment is arrived, and your character is confirmed to impiety beyond the possibility of change; love to the Saviour's interest will swallow up all regard to you, and you must suffer the dismay of hearing them join the Lord in passing your sentence of condemnation. Oh think of this, professors of religion, and ye office-bearers of the church of Christ, and as ye cannot now endure the thought of passing that dreadful

ful sentence upon your friends and the people of your charge, see that you be earnest in your prayers in their behalf; faithful and zealous in your exhortations to them: if by any means God may make you instrumental in turning them from the path of impiety, or establishing them in love to holiness. Do not suffer a false tenderness to cause you to neglect your duty unto them, lest failing to admonish them now, they turn to you in that day when you join with Christ in passing sentence upon them, and say, ' Had you but been faithful to us while upon earth, we might have escaped this condemnation.'

2. The *second* promise is, *And I will give him the morning star.* I presume this promise is related to that famous one in the book of *Daniel*, (Ch. xii. 3-) " They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmanent; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." The Lord Jesus Christ is the *Sun* of Righteousness, and his beams enlighten the intellectual world, and will for ever irradiate the heavenly kingdom, for the *New Jerusalem* " has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine on it: for the glory of God (doth) lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." And he who shines like the sun with his own light; like that luminary, causes many to shine with reflected rays; his people shine in wisdom and holiness because he shineth upon them, hence it is said unto the church, (Isai. lx. 1.) " Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Whether all the stars shine by reflected light, or it is only the planets that are bright in *borrowed* rays, is not a matter of any importance as connected with the doctrine of the text, for the *morning star*, (the bright shiner of the morning,) is undeniably a planet, and owes its superior glory to that source of light the *sun*. And as it is with the stars in the natural horizon, so it shall be with the lights that glitter in the heavenly world, for there also " one star differeth from another star in glory." Allowing this to be a just representation of the subject under consideration; by giving to the conquering believer the *Morning Star*, I understand, granting him to shine with the superior brightness of that *planet*. A promise this, most suitable to encourage the pious members of this Christian society, who were

were no doubt despised by the boasted sons of wisdom, who had learned from Jezebel to relish the *depths of Satan*; they would not fail to ridicule those, who thought it their duty to *keep the works* of Christ, for their *puritanical* and *legal* conduct, which to liberal minded Christians, as they considered themselves, was a sure proof of contracted views or a weak intellect, and made them the objects of their pity and contempt. Regard it not, says the Lord, (who himself was despised as a fool by the wise men of the world,) but continue in spite of all to *keep my works unto the end* of your pilgrimage upon earth, I will soon make it appear who are truly wise, and when they who despise you for your love to me and my ways, are cast "into outer darkness," *I will give* you to shine among those who are wise to salvation with the light and glory of *the morning star*. Happy those who are willing to be accounted fools for the sake of Christ and their love to his ways; concerning such characters, St John, says, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is." O Sun of Righteousness let us see light in thy light, irradiate us with thy bright beams now, henceforth, and forever. Amen.

PART

Part Second.

IMPROVEMENT AND APPLICATION OF THE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURE OF THE CHURCH OF THYATIRA ;

OR,

A DISCOURSE ON CHURCH DISCIPLINE, (THIS CHURCH BEING LAX THEREIN.)

REVELATION ii. 20.

Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

INTRODUCTION.

THE angel of this church is highly commended for many excellencies, (*See* v. 19.) but at the same time the Lord found it necessary to censure him for being lax in church discipline, which was at so low an ebb that a wicked female named Jezebel was not only permitted to continue a member of the community, but was also allowed to seduce His servants to join her in licentious and idolatrous practices. (*Text.*) In this respect the office-bearers of Thyatira were much inferior to those of the church of EPHESUS, of whom the Lord bears testimony, (that notwithstanding their decay of zeal to spread abroad the savour of his name,) they hated the deeds of the Nicolaitanes ; could not bear wicked people to continue among them ; had tried false prophets, and silenced them as liars. (v. 6 and 2.) Because of their negligence in this respect, the Lord threatens to take the work of discipline into his own hands, except their speedy repentance should prevent ;

I will punish, I *myself* will make her and her sinful accomplices examples of my righteous displeasure. (ver. 22, 23.) This threatening is a most alarming one, both as it respects the sinful party which God was about to destroy, and also to the governors of this church, whom he thus declared he would renounce as unworthy of that office, the duties of which they so shamefully neglected to fulfil. Severe, yet just sentence! recorded for the warning of every office-bearer in the church of Christ. *He that hath an ear; let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

The present day affords encouraging prospects concerning the spread of the Gospel. Great and laudable is the zeal evidenced by Missionary, Bible, Religious-Tract, Sunday-School Societies, &c.; I wish them success in the name of the Lord, and have from the beginning resolved to devote the profits of these Lectures, the *first fruits* of my publications, to their service; but at the same time, I would suggest a fear that there is but too little attention paid by religious denominations in general to church discipline. BAXTER in his *Reformed Pastor*,* says, (and I fear he would repeat the same words, were he again to survey the land.) ‘It has made me wonder sometimes to look on the face of England, and see how few congregations in the land have any considerable execution of *discipline*. How many ministers there are who know not their own charge, who plead for the truth of their particular churches, and know not *who* are the members of them,’ &c. As the characteristic feature of the church of *Thyatira*, is *neglect of Discipline*, on account of which they are censured by the Lord; I trust my brethren and fathers in the gospel of Christ, will bear with me, while I endeavour to hold up this subject to general attention. It is not any peculiarities in the mode of governing this or the other Christian society, that I wish to present them with, but *discipline* in general that I would recommend. A discipline, that every gospel church may attend unto;

* I would recommend all my readers who hold any office in the church of Christ to give this book an attentive reading. A new edition is published lately for *Butterworth* of London. I shall frequently have occasion to quote from him; the letters *Mag.* will stand for this work.

unto ; that is binding on Christians of every creed ; and that all the lovers of the spiritual rule of Christ's kingdom, should as heartily join in supporting, as, blessed be God, they do in this happy period, to promote the spread of the word of the kingdom. For as difference of *sentiment* in points of doctrine, and differences in *modes* of established worship, do not hinder Christians from uniting their efforts in order to diffuse the knowledge of God's word, to the end that mankind may be enlightened and saved, so neither need these differences hinder them, from uniting with one mind to enforce the wholesome discipline of the house of the living God. 'Men may serve God acceptably under very different modes of church-government ; and, in point of fact, these modes were different in different places during the primitive ages of Christianity.' (MILNER'S *Church History*, vol. i. pp. 513.) With this sentiment, MOSHEIM (vol. i. 124) accords, saying, 'Christian worship was from the beginning celebrated in different manners in different places, and that, no doubt, by the orders, or at least with the approbation of the apostles and their disciples.' But this did not prevent them from endeavouring to promote the purity of their respective churches by means of *discipline*, and in attention to this subject the grand work of reformation still consists, by whomsoever it is enforced. 'If Bishops would do this work, I would take them for *reformers* ; and if Presbyterians will do it, I will take them for *reformers* ; and those who neglect and hinder it, I have always taken for *deformers*.' (Bar.) How lovely it would be to see societies, like the seven golden lamps connected with one vase, (See Church of Ephesus, Part First. § 1.) unite together for the purpose of keeping up the purity of Christian discipline. I am happy to have so much said on this important subject by able divines of different churches, who all agree in recommending the same, that I shall chiefly fill the following pages with a collection of *arranged* quotations from their works. By this means I hope to be more generally acceptable to my readers than I could expect to be were I to become dictator on such a subject. Yet, after all that can be said, I would not be too sanguine in my hopes of success, knowing that it is a hard matter to bring about the *reformation* of churches.

churches which are become *lax* in their administration of discipline; yea, and that it is almost as difficult to prevent the gradual *declension* of churches from their primitive state and order. Dr OWEN, (in his *Treatise on Evangelical Churches*) says, ‘I can give no security that the churches in our way shall not, in process of time, decline from their primitive constitution and order, either in their power and spirit, in faith and love, or in the outward practice of them, unless they continually watch against all beginnings and occasions of such declensions, and frequently renew their *reformation*.’ Praying that the Lord may bless these pages to the societies of his people, and the officers of his church, whatever post they fill, and by whatever name they are distinguished, I shall,

I. Shew the general *principles* of CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

II. Inquire who are the proper *subjects* of the GOSPEL SACRAMENTS.

III. ADDRESS all parties concerned.

I. I shall endeavour to lay before my readers the general *principles* of CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

The proper prayer for a Christian Minister, is, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,” &c. and in promoting this kingdom, and building up his church, all the office-bearers in his house, “are labourers together with God.” Hence their motto, as Dr MATHER, (in his *Student and Preacher*,) says, should be ‘*Ut prosim*,—that I may do good,’ viz. in converting sinners to the faith, and building up the saints in knowledge and holiness; this is surely a work that requires more attention than merely preaching a sermon or two to a congregation on the Lord’s day. “The service of the sanctuary and of the Sabbath, (says Dr SMITH, in the *Sacred Office*,) is not *all* the work of a minister. It is perhaps the least and the lightest part of it. He must rebuke, reprove, exhort, and teach daily; and at all seasons, and from house to house; otherwise he can never have the pleasure of seeing his labour prosper. On the contrary, like the stone which *Sisyphus* rolled up the hill, and which rebounded to the valley whenever he slackened his efforts, our work will fall back every time we lessen our diligence, and so put us to the same necessity with the *Sisyphæan*

phcan shade of renewing our labours. The statuary, the painter, and other artificers, after an intermission, will find *their* work in the state in which they left it ; but *we* have frequently the mortification to see our efforts effaced, like those figures which have been made in the sand, and of which no impression remains after the tide is returned.' In considering this subject, I purpose to take a general view of the nature, necessity, &c. of private instruction.—Show the need that ministers stand in of assistant church-officers.—Lay down rules for electing such office-bearers.—Show the utility of church discipline.—And give a concise view of ecclesiastical *Censures* and of Excommunication.

1. In proposing a general plan of *private instruction*, it appears necessary in the *first* place to provide a book for the purpose of enrolling the names of your church members. Israel of old were enrolled according to their tribes ; and the primitive churches had their *Diptycha*, or Registers, in which the names of the church members were written. Over this catalogue, Dr WATTS, in his *Address to Ministers*, advises them to cast now and then ' a pastoral eye of affection. This (he adds) will awaken and incline you to send up proper petitions for each of them, so far as you are acquainted with their circumstances of body and mind. This will excite you to give thanks to God on account of those " who walk as becomes the gospel," and who have either begun, or proceeded and increased in the Christian life and temper by your ministry : you will observe the names of the negligent and backsliding, to mourn over and admonish them : you will be put in mind how to dispose of your time in Christian visits, and learn the better how to fulfil your whole ministry among them.' Private instruction appears necessary, when we consider, that " it not only grounds our (people) in the first principles of Christianity, and lays the foundation of religion in their souls, but also enables them to understand those terms and modes of speech which perpetually occur in our sermons. In public we speak to *many* ; and what we say may sometimes hardly suit the particular case of any number of them : or if it should, the fewest only will take the trouble of applying it to themselves, though ready enough to apply it to their neighbours. But when we address only

only *one*, he knows *he* is the man : his thoughts are kept close to the discourse, he is obliged to take part in it, the whole of it is made level to his capacity, and he is forced to apply it. Indeed this personal and private teaching is so necessary, that, without it, little can be expected from the most excellent sermons. Try it when you please, my brethren, and you will find, that hundreds who have heard your sermons perhaps for 20 years, are grossly and wofully ignorant, if they have not also been taught and examined in private. A teacher, who should impose no task, nor ask any question of his scholars, although he should oftener than one day in a week read excellent lectures, would find very few of them make any sensible progress. In a word, what *Quintilian* says of children, is equally applicable to grown people. "They are like *narrow-necked* bottles, which, if you wish to fill with water, you must take singly, and pour it into one after another ; for you will never speed by setting them all together, and casting ever so much water among them." (Dr SMITH.) BAXTER found the truth of this supposed ignorance in respect of many who had long heard the word of life, and says, referring to the time he first established meetings for the private instruction of his parishioners, ' For my part, I study to speak as plainly and affectionately as I can : next my study to speak truth, this is my chief study, and yet I frequently meet with those who have been my hearers eight or ten years, who know not whether Christ be God or man, and wonder when I tell them the history of his birth, life, and death, as if they had never heard it before : and of those who know the history of the gospel, how few are there who know the nature of that repentance, faith, and holiness, which it requires. I have found by experience that many have got more knowledge and remorse of conscience in half an hour's *close discourse*, than they did from ten year's *public preaching*.' The subjects of this private conference with our hearers is, *first* respecting their *knowledge* of the doctrines of the gospel ; and *secondly*, respecting their *experience* of the power of godliness.

2. The *labour* attending a plan for giving private instruction, is certainly very great to the pious minister who has the care of a large charge, or an extensive parish ; yet, many have conscientiously

tiously attended thereunto and held private conference with *all* their people, at least, once in the year. It used to be a general practice, and it is still followed by many ministers in North Britain, to afford each of their flock the benefit of an annual *pastoral visit*. The Rev. Mr BAXTER, indeed, got each of his parishoners to *come to his house*, for the purpose of receiving his private instruction once in the course of the year; and when a congregation is numerous, this method would be attended with many advantages, and is a duty the *people* owe both to themselves and to their ministers; but whether the people come to us, as the general plan, or we go to them, a private conference with each is of the utmost importance. If the advantage of personal instruction is allowed, it must also be acknowledged that once a year is too seldom to answer all the ends designed; and with many pastors, the other duties of their calling renders it impossible for them to give this personal instruction oftener. Yet let none suppose that even in this case, the people, are necessarily excluded from opportunities of enjoying personal exhortations *more frequently*, for the Lord has so constituted his church as to provide against this inconvenience. A Christian church does not consist *merely* of the pastor on one hand, and the people on the other, but has also, by divine appointment, a middle order of men, (called by different names in different churches,) who are a part of the flock of the minister's charge, and, at the same time, his fellow helpers in the gospel. These officers in the primitive church appear to have been of *two* kinds, *one* to take care of the temporal concerns of the church, and minister to the necessities of the poor, and the *other* to assist the pastor in building up the body of Christ, by their instructions and exhortations. The *former* order of these church officers appear to have been the *Deacons*; * and the *latter* the *Elders* of the

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* 'The office of Deacon, *originally*, was to serve tables, the Lord's table, the minister's table, and the poor's table. They took care of the *secular* affairs of the church, received and disbursed monies, kept the church's accounts, and provided every thing necessary for its temporal good. Thus, while the bishop attended to the souls, the deacons attended to the bodies of the people. The pastor to the spiritual, and the deacons to the temporal interests of the church. Acts vi.' (Buck's *Theo. Dist.*)

Christian churches. Both these offices were at times supplied by the same persons, (as they still are in many churches at this day,) but they appear more frequently to have been distinct from each other, the Deacons being the *temporal* officers of the church, and the Elders, who were appointed in every church, (Acts xiv. 23.) taking a subordinate charge of the *spiritual* concerns of the flock of Christ. Such like officers were still *necessary* for the proper ordering of the church, and pious ministers would do good both to themselves and to their people, by availing themselves of the aid of their labours. Mr BAXTER gives some valuable advice on this head.

‘ Make use (says he,) of your people’s *parts* to the utmost, as your *helpers* in an ordinary way, under your direction, or else they will make use of them in a disorderly and dividing way in opposition to you. One great cause of schism has been, ministers contemptuously crying down private men’s preaching, and at the same time not willing to make any use of the gifts which God has bestowed on such for their assistance. They have thrust them too far from holy things, as if they were a profane generation. The work is likely to go poorly on, if there be no hands employed in it but the ministers. God does not give any of his gifts to be buried, but for common use. By a prudent improvement of the gifts of the more able Christians, we may receive much help, and prevent their abuse. The uses you must especially put them to, are these.—Urge them to be diligent in teaching and praying with their own families, especially catechising them and teaching them the meaning of what they learn, and setting it home upon their affections; and there, if they have a mind to preach to their children and servants, so they undertake no more than they are able to do, I know no reason why they may not.—Urge them to step out now and then to their poor ignorant neighbours, and catechise and instruct them in meekness and patience from day to day; and that will bring them more peace of conscience than contemning them.—Acquaint them with their duty of watching over each other in brotherly love, admonishing and exhorting one another daily; and if any (of the church members,) walk scandalously, to tell them of their fault

fault before two or three, after the contempt of private reproof, and if that prevail not, to tell the officers of the church, that they may be proceeded with as Christ has appointed.—At your private meetings, and on days of humiliation or thanksgiving in private, employ them in prayer.—If there be any very ignorant or scandalous sinners that you know of, and you cannot possibly have time yourself to speak to them at that season, send some of those who are able and sober, to instruct the ignorant, and to admonish the offenders.—Let some of them be chosen to represent the church, and to be their agents to prepare all cases of discipline for public audience, &c. When pastors are thus assisted by the talents and piety of their office-bearers, (gifted church-members), the cause of vital godliness bids fair to prosper under their care. By means of the diligence of subordinate officers, the army and navy are fully instructed in their duty, and are moreover preserved in excellent order; and the under officers of the church of Christ will be found equally useful in promoting the knowledge of divine truth and the practice of piety in Christian societies. ‘In the vallies of *Piedmont*, a poor and afflicted people have resided from age to age who have maintained the doctrines of Christianity in their purity, and given convincing proofs of the power of those doctrines on their hearts and lives. In the history of their churches, published by JOHN LEGER, an account is given of the spiritual intercourse the members of the several societies had with one another. For the purpose of inculcating religious instruction, and communicating Christian experience, every village or neighbourhood belonging to these churches was provided with one or more persons; who were to watch over a small number of their brethren, to inquire into the state of their mind, to talk with them concerning their faith in the Redeemer, and the experience of the power of his grace upon their hearts.’ (FAWCETT’S *Constitution of a Gospel Church*.)

3. Let us proceed to consider the important work of *electing* church officers. It is necessary that the Pastors, Elders, and People, should all concur in the calling of any one to office; and this concurrence can be effected by no other means than that of each of these orders being agreed as to the part they are to take

in the election. MILNER, in his *Church History*, (vol. i ch. 20) supposes *three* chief orders in the church, *first*, Bishops, (or Pastors) *secondly*, Presbyters, (or Elders,) *thirdly*, Deacons; and adds, ‘besides these, there appeared in the third century, a number of lower officers, as door-keepers, sub-deacons, acolyths or attendants, who, by degrees, had grown up in the Christian church.’ Concerning these under officers, he observes, ‘A much more candid and true account of them may be given, than what has been imposed on us, with sufficient malignity. It could not be to administer to the pride and sloth of the higher clergy, that such offices were instituted; Christians increased in number, and more labourers were required. Besides, as they had not then any seminaries of learning, the serving of the Church in these lower offices was made an introductory step to the higher ones: and this was their most important use.’ The following quotations will shew the mode agreed upon for electing to those different offices in the Church of Christ. ‘*First*, respecting the electing a bishop or pastor. The characters of men to be elected to this office were very strictly examined, public notice was given, that any one might inform against them, if they were vicious and immoral. The decision on their *moral conduct* was left to the people; that on their *doctrine* belonged chiefly to the bishops, who ordained them. For the power of ordination belonged, properly, to bishops (or pastors) alone, though presbyters concurred with them and with the body of the people.’ *Secondly*, he considers that presbyters were frequently appointed after the same manner. But *Thirdly*, ‘In filling up the *lower* offices of the church, the bishop (or pastor) acted still more according to his discretion.’ Dr OWEN, (*as before*,) gives some good directions concerning electing office-bearers. ‘The church is not to call any one to office who is not known unto them; of whose frame of spirit, and manner of walking, they have not had some experience; nor an upstart, or one lately come unto them. He must be one who by his carriage and deportment hath obtained a good report even among them that are *without*, (unless they be enemies and scoffers;) and one that hath in some good measure manifested his faith in, and love and obedience unto Jesus Christ

Christ in the church. This is the chief *trust* that the Lord Jesus Christ hath committed unto his churches ; and if they are negligent in this, or if, at all adventures, they will impose an officer upon him : an officer in his house, without satisfaction of his *meetness* upon due enquiry, it is a great dishonour to him, and a sufficient cause for his provocation. In the choice of officers, churches are principally made the overseers of their own purity and edification.—‘ No person is fit to be a Christian pastor or elder, who is not himself taken up with the predominant *love of God* ; who is not heartily devoted to God, and his service and honour ; who is not of a *public spirit* as to the church ; does not delight in her beauty, nor long for her felicity ; who does not set his heart on the *life to come*, and regard the matters of everlasting life above all the things of this present world ; who does love the *unity* and purity of the church, and abhor discords and divisions.’ (*Bar.*) Those who do not answer the above description, whatever else they are qualified for, are unfit to be employed as servants in the church, *the house of the living God*. You who have the nomination and election of church officers, (according to the order of your different churches) see that you supply the house of Christ with faithful servants. You who are covetous, ambitious, and carnal, &c, think not of aspiring to an office for which you have no qualification ; and as to you who are *in* office, but destitute of the afore-mentioned principles, you must either get the spirit of your office, or resign a post in which you but do injury to the cause you profess to serve, and pull down upon yourselves the just indignation of God.

4. A Christian society, under the conduct of its pious office-bearers, resembles a body politic, of which Christ is Head, and which only requires the animating spirit of discipline, to preserve it in beautiful conformity to his laws. In such a church, proper employment is found for all persons, and to fill up every opportunity they enjoy of being together ; here the church members have line upon line of religious instruction, to inform their minds concerning the *doctrines* of the gospel ; they enjoy many exhortations calculated to establish them in Christian *experience* and a virtuous *practice* ; they are visited and comforted in their
affliction

afflictions, have their *zeal* and *benevolence* directed in a right channel, find themselves warned against the insinuations of the *seducer*, receive seasonable admonitions when they wander from the *path of life*, and when differences happen between themselves, enjoy the easiest method of *conciliating* matters. Each of these advantages might be greatly enlarged upon, but I shall only notice the last mentioned one, of healing misunderstandings between brethren. It is only in the church that enjoys the discipline of the gospel, that attendance to the advice of our Lord, generally speaking, will be either practicable or successful, where, He directs his people, saying, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother, but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church." It is certainly a pleasing account that Dr BUCHANAN, (*Christian Researches*, p. 73.) gives of the Christians of *Tanjore*, in the East Indies, when speaking of Mr KOLHOFF, he says, "to him as arbitrator and father, apply all Christians that are at variance, disturbed from without or from within, out of service or distressed; for most of our Christians will do any thing rather than go to law."

5. It is now time to consider *admonition* and *excommunication* as parts of the discipline of the house of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ as the Husband and Head of the church, has committed the keys of admission into and expulsion from the privileges of his visible church, into the hands of his bride; and when the church assembled together, according to the instructions of his word, and under the influence of his Spirit, admit any into or expel them from their society, he confirms their decision from his throne in heaven. (*See Mat. xvi. 19.—xviii. 18.*) Church censures which are of a *religious*, not of a *civil* nature: have respect to crimes committed against the rules of morality, or the order of the Christian society to which we have *voluntarily* joined ourselves. The design of church censures on the *one* hand, are the reformation and salvation of the offender, and on the *other*, to prevent

prevent the sin committed from having an ill effect upon others. *First*, 'ADMONITION denotes a hint or advice given to another, whereby we reprove him for his fault, or remind him of his duty. Admonition was a part of discipline much used in the ancient church : it was the first act or step towards the punishment or expulsion of delinquents. In case of private offences, it was performed according to the evangelical rule, *privately* ; in case of public offence, *openly*, before the church. If either of these sufficed for the recovery of the fallen person, all farther proceedings, in a way of censure ceased ; if they did not, recourse was had to excommunication.' (BUCK's *Theo. Dict.*) But before it came to excommunication, which is the *Second* thing to consider, they would have received *various* admonitions. Concerning church censures, it is necessary to attend to the following advice. ' That the accusation of none, no not the most respectable and best in the church, be taken without proof, nor rashly entertained, nor that a minister should make himself a party till he have sufficient evidence of the case. It is even better to let many vicious persons go unpunished, or uncensured, when we want full evidence, than to censure one unjustly, which we may easily do if we go upon presumptions, which is sure to bring on the pastors the scandal of partiality, and of unrighteous and injurious dealing, and thereby cause all their reproofs and censures to become contemptible.' (*Bax.*) Where church officers are pious and vigilant, notorious offences will not often remain *undiscovered*, and if they fail to admonish the offender, and report his faults if he continues in them, they are not doing their duty to God and the church ; nor indeed to the offending person, whom they might by this means be instrumental in bringing to repentance, and saving from destruction. *Baxter*, makes the following remarks on the bad consequences of neglecting discipline, (1.) ' It has (says he) a strong tendency to *delude* souls, by making those think they are Christians who are not ; being permitted to live in the reputation of such, and not separated from the rest by God's ordinance. It also has a tendency to make the scandalous think *lightly* of their sin, seeing that it is tolerated by the pastors of the church. (2.) We *corrupt* Christianity itself in the eyes of the world, and do
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our part to make men believe that to be a Christian is but to be of such an *opinion*, &c. (3.) We keep up *separation*, by permitting the worst to remain uncensured in our churches, so that many honest Christians think they are necessitated to withdraw. (4.) We do much to bring the *wrath* of God upon ourselves and our congregations, and thereby to blast the fruits of our labours ; thus the Lord threatens to punish the corrupt members of the church of *Thyatira*, if their officers did not proceed to censure them as they deserved. *Excommunication*, says Dr OWEN, requires the following things in its administration. (1.) *Prayer*, without which it cannot be administered in the name of our *Lord Jesus Christ*. (2.) It is to be accompanied with *lamentation*, or mourning. (3.) It must be attended with a due sense of the *future judgment* of Christ. For we judge for Christ, and woe to them who dare pronounce this sentence without a persuasion that it is the sentence of Christ himself. The end of this sentence being for *healing*, not for *destruction* ; the duties of the church to a person justly excommunicated, are prayer ; admonition, as occasion is offered ; forbearance from common intercourse ; and a readiness to the restoration of love, and all the fruits of it upon repentance.' Again, Mr FAWCETT justly observes that, 'In the act of *exclusion*, a church can take no more *from* any member of the society than what it first *gave* him ; that is, a *name* and a *place* in the house of God. It does not affect his temporal estate, and civil affairs. It does not subject him to fines or imprisonment. It interferes not with the business of the civil magistrate. It makes no change in the natural and civil relations between husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and servants. Neither does it deprive a man of the liberty of attending on the ministry of the word, or the public ordinances of the sanctuary.' A church assembled together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the purpose of judging an unworthy member, is the most awful of all earthly tribunals, and the sentence they pass in the name of Christ, represents that tremendous one by which he will cast the false professor out of his heavenly kingdom ; and should turn the attention of the excommunicated, and indeed of every individual, to those
alarming

alarming words, "Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Oh! may none who read these pages, may come under the condemnation of this sentence.

II. This head concerns the question, Who are the proper *subjects* for partaking of the GOSPEL SACRAMENTS? (The appointed signs of *professed* and *acknowledged* church membership.) The determination of this point is of the utmost consequence in respect to purity of church discipline. The Protestant churches in general receive two Sacraments, as of divine authority, *viz.* BAPTISM and the LORD'S SUPPER: by the *former* of these we are figuratively *admitted* into the church of God; and by means of the *latter* we, from time to time, *renew the profession* of our station therein, as the disciples of Christ, in hopes of eternal life.

(I.) BAPTISM is administered by means of the application of water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (See Mat. xxviii. 19.) It being no part of my proposed plan, to meddle with the controversy respecting the Subjects of this sacrament, whether infants or only adults; nor the Mode, whether it should be by sprinkling or immersion, I shall only consider the subject, as it stands in either case *related* to church discipline; to which all parties pay at least a profession of regard. It is well known that the primitive Christians were at great pains to instruct the heathens, who were brought under serious impressions, in the *doctrines* of the gospel, and that they required of them a public *profession* of their faith before they received them into the bosom of the church by baptism. It is still as necessary that all adults should be instructed in the doctrines of the gospel, and give satisfactory evidence of *repentance towards God*, and of *faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*, before they are baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity. May all the ministers and officers of the church of Christ, as they are answerable to God and his people for their conduct, see to it that they never admit any adults, through this porch into their respective churches, but those whom they have *reason* to believe are truly converted persons. As to the children that are brought forwards in order to be baptized, it is in fact the prayer of those who present them
for

for this purpose ; that the Lord Jesus Christ would be graciously pleased to admit them within the pale of his church, and thus take them under his tuition in order to their salvation. Those who *present* the children, promise on their part to instruct them in the fear of the Lord ; and as being dedicated to Him, to train them up for his service. This duty of instructing baptized children in the truths of the gospel, and endeavouring to bring them unto the knowledge of the Lord, is strongly insisted upon both by Episcopalians and Presbyterians. The *Church of England* is so particular on this head, that her service appoints no less than three persons of supposed Christian knowledge and piety, to aid the parents in looking after the religious instruction of the infant thus presented to the Lord. And the *Westminster Confession* orders the officiating minister before he baptizes the child, to exhort the parent who presents the same. ‘To consider the great mercy of God to him and his child ; to bring up the child in the *knowledge* of the Christian religion, and in the *nurture* and *admonition* of the Lord. And to let him know the danger of God’s wrath to himself and children if he be negligent ; requiring his solemn *promise* for the performance of his duty.’ And to make this promise more *solemn* to the parents, and to stir up the minds of *others* by repeated representations of their duty to their families, it is also appointed that baptism be not administered in *private* places, or privately, but in public worship, and in the face of the congregation, where the people may most conveniently *see* and *hear*. Since a solemn vow is taken by those who present their children to God, in baptism ; that they will bring up the child in the *knowledge* of the Christian religion, and in the *nurture* and *admonition* of the Lord : *Ungodly* parents, who, as they neither understand nor practice Christianity themselves, are entirely incapable of and indisposed for teaching it to others, ought not on any account to be allowed baptism in behalf of their children, as such a permission only ‘tends to establish the negligence of *parents*, and to confirm the stupidity and security of wicked *children*.’ (EDWARDS, on *Qualifications for full Communion*, Ob. xix. an. 3.) Yet I presume no hesitation need be felt on this head, by any one that admits the propriety of infant baptism

baptism, when there is good reason to believe, that either parent being truly pious, will do their duty to the child whom they desire to be thus presented to God. (1 Cor. vii. 14. has sometimes been quoted in defence of this sentiment.)

(II.) Before I proceed to consider the LORD'S SUPPER in connection with Christian *discipline*, I shall offer a few preliminary observations on this sacrament. The Lord Jesus Christ having, in the fulness of time, according to the promise made unto the fathers, shed his blood as an atoning sacrifice for our sins, and being exalted as the High Priest of our profession to the right hand of the Majesty on high, has left a command with his disciples, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations;" (Luke xxiv. 47) and that those who believe in him, should shew forth his death till he come, by eating of bread and drinking of wine together in his name. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." On these words I would observe, *First*, By the *coming* of Christ thus referred to, is meant his second coming to judge the world and reward his people. *Secondly*, Eating of bread and drinking of wine together, shews forth the death of Christ, in different respects: as, The *manner* of his death, which was by giving his body to be *bruised* and his blood to be *shed* for our sakes; even as the bread is broken, and the wine poured out in the Christian sacrament. The *end*, or design of his sufferings, which was in order to *atone* for our sins, that deserved the wrath and curse of God; and here, the Lord's supper calls the atonement by Christ to the *remembrance* of his people, even as it was *prefigured* under the law by bloody sacrifices. The means by which he *nourishes* that principle of spiritual life, imparted to those who believe; which is by giving them his flesh and his blood, (the constant supplies of grace purchased by these his sufferings,) to be the invigorating nourishment of our souls, even as the body is fed by these figurative sacramental elements. *Thirdly*, On these occasions we should feel holy *admiration*, at the amazing love of Christ in dying for our offences, inviting us to his table, &c.—*Earnest Desire*, to hold spiritual communion with him in this ordinance,—*Entire Dedication* of our hearts and

lives to him whose love surpasses our conception.—Tender *Affection* towards our fellow Christians of every rank and condition, who are all purchased with the blood of Christ.—Cheerful the *Hope* of that eternal and inconceivable glory, that He as our forerunner has taken possession of in our behalf.—Benevolent *Zeal* to promote the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom, as far as our influence may extend. Having made these preliminary observations, I proceed, (1st) To inquire on *whom* it is laid as a duty or granted them as a privilege to come forward to the Lord's table? The answer in general terms is, *Those whose hearts are right with God.* It is the duty of others to get their hearts *set right* with him, but until this is the case, it is no part of their duty or privilege to *communicate* with his people; for, as Dr SOUTH observes, *Sermons* (Vol. II. Ser. 8.) The Lord's supper, 'Is not a *converting*, but a *confirming* ordinance. It is properly our *spiritual food*; and, as all *food* presupposes a *principle of life* in him who receives it, which life is, by this means, to be continued and supported; so the sacrament of the Lord's supper is originally intended to *preserve* and *maintain* that spiritual life, (which we have received.) Upon which account, according to the true nature and intent of this sacrament, men should not expect *life*, but *growth* from it: and see that there be something to be fed, before they seek out for provision. For, the truth is, for any one who is not passed from *death to life*, and has not in him that *new living principle*, which we have been hitherto speaking of, to come to this spiritual repast, is, upon the matter, as absurd and preposterous, as if he who makes a feast, should send to the graves and the church yards for guests, or entertain and treat a corpse as a banquet.'

ZANCHIUS, (as quoted by *Baxter*,) concerning the Lord's supper, says, the wicked 'ought not to be admitted. But that they are admitted, may happen two ways, *either* through the *ignorance* of the ministers who did not know them to be such as they are, (and, indeed we cannot commend this ignorance, because the ministers ought to know what sort of persons they are to whom they administer the Lord's supper; and if they be ignorant, they are reprehensible for a supine and reprobable negligence) or when

when it is known to all what sort of persons they are, they do not strive to repel them, through *fear*, or some other respect to man. This we condemn in the minister, at the fault of timidity ; for a minister of Christ ought to be most sincere and valiant. In all our churches, indeed, before the sacrament is administered, all such persons are excluded. And truly it is a great scandal, that both swine and dogs should have a place among the children of God : but much more so, if the most holy symbols of the Lord's supper should be prostituted to such. Therefore, the churches of Christ ought not to carry such wicked persons in their bosom ; nor admit the worthy and the unworthy promiscuously to the Lord's supper.' *The Rev. Jonathan EDWARD'S, (Humble Inquiry into the qualifications for full Communion,)* considers three things to be necessary respecting all who come forwards or are admitted to the Lord's table ; viz. a *principle* of piety in the soul ; *profession* of respect to Christ ; and *appearance* of religion in the conduct. The *first* of these, *the religion of the heart*, respects the persons that is desirous of coming forwards, since no one but himself can tell, what sense he has of his fallen condition, what trust he places in Christ the Redeemer, what love he feels towards his name, and what intercourse is kept open between heaven and his soul. He who is destitute of the *principle* of religion, does but mock God by coming forwards to his table, there to profess before his people sentiments of piety to which he is a stranger. On this head, O ye communicants, "examine *yourselves*," lest you come forwards to be built up in *carnal security*, and perhaps do not discover your true state till you are launched into an awful eternity. The *second* of the aforementioned qualifications, is a *profession of respect to Christ*, which, as it supposes an *enlightened* Understanding, and a *sanctified* Will ; concerns the opinion of the minister, (and others,) who is to judge of the religious state of the person wishing to communicate. If upon examination of the candidate in the fear, and according to the word of God, he finds him well *informed* as it respects the doctrines of the fall of man ; redemption by Christ ; the nature of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ; the work of the Spirit in drawing, justifying, sealing and sanctifying

tifying the soul : and has reason to believe he has the enjoyment of an evangelical *experience* of the power of these truths upon his heart ; he should by all means encourage the candidate to come forwards, and take the symbols of the love of Christ to his comfort, and thus *publicly profess* what God has wrought in his behalf. But if a Minister, on *tender examination*, finds a person grossly *ignorant* of the first principles of the gospel of Christ, or has reason to believe he has no evangelical *experience* of the power of these things upon his heart ; as he is accountable to the Lord for his conduct, and is desirous of the conversion and salvation of that soul, he must refuse to admit such an one to the Lord's table for the present, and dismissing him with prayer urge him to seek after *enlightening* and *converting* grace. The *third* pre-requisite, which is an *appearance of religion in the outward deportment*, or as Mr EDWARD's phrases it, a '*visibility* or manifestation of *sainthood* or holiness,' equally concerns Ministers, Officers, and Members of the Christian church, who are to unite their endeavours to promote the purity of the body of Christ, watching over each other in love, admonishing each other in the fear of the Lord, and, if in case of offence, private admonition is not sufficient to produce the necessary change of conduct, reporting it to the church, in order that the *irregular walking* professor may be dealt with accordingly.

2. I beg leave to state some *facts* respecting the discipline of the *early ages* of Christianity. '*Excommunication*, in the primitive church, was intended to bring men to *submission* ; upon which they were gradually received (again) as they passed through the several courses of penitential discipline assigned them.' '*Basil*, who lived in the middle of the fourth century, describes the established rules of the then prevailing discipline. The case he mentions was of such as had offended by incontinence, who for the first year were to be excluded entirely from the whole service, and to stand weeping at the church door, *begging* the prayers of the ministers and people : this was the station of *mourners*. In the second year they were admitted to that of *hearers* ; in the third, to that of the *prostrate*, called by way of eminence, the *penance* ; in the fourth, they were permitted to stand

stand with the *faithful*, whilst they communicated, but might not partake with them : this I have termed the *station of consistentes*, or *bystanders*. Thus at last they were restored, in full, to all their privileges, and allowed to communicate.' (*Penitential Discipline of the primitive Church, by a presbyter of the church of England.*) But it was not the gross act of licentiousness alone, that in the estimation of the primitive church, rendered professors unworthy to communicate ; plays, balls, and public meetings of entertainment, were serious evils in their apprehension. Games of chance also were represented by them as the occasion of blasphemies, losses, quarrels, and all manner of crimes.

CHRYSOSTOM calls the stage an academy of incontinence. 'What harm, say you, is there in going to a play ? Is that sufficient to keep one from the communion ? I ask you, can there be a more shameless sin, than to come to the holy table, defiled with adultery ? hear the words of Him who is to be our judge. Jesus Christ saith, *whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.* What can be said of those, who passionately spend whole days in those places, in looking on women of ill fame : with what face will they pretend to say, they did not behold them to lust after them. They see women adorned on purpose to inspire lust. If in the church itself, where psalms are sung, the scripture is read, and the fear of the Almighty appears, lust will creep in like a thief, how shall the frequenters of the stage, overcome the motions of concupiscence ? (See MILNER'S vol. ii. 297.) The advice of Cyprian to his brother *Eucratius* respecting one who had left off attending the stage himself but got his living by qualifying others for that work, is worthy of attention. 'You cannot (says he) say, that the man has *ceased* from his business, when he provides substitutes in his own place ; and furnishes the play house with a number of performers instead of one ; If the man makes poverty his excuse, his necessities may be relieved in the same manner as those of others, who are maintained by the alms of the church, provided he be content with frugal and simple food, and do not fancy that we are to hire him, by a salary, to *cease from sin* ; since it is not our interest, but HIS OWN, that is concerned

concerned in this affair.—What sort of gain is that, which tears men from a participation in the banquet of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and leads them from their miserable and ruinous feasting in this world, to the punishments of eternal famine and thirst? Therefore, if possible, *recover* him from this depravity and infamy to the way of innocence and to the hope of life, that he may be content with a parsimonious, but salutary maintenance from the church. He must, however, no longer teach his pernicious lessons; but himself endeavour to learn something from the church that may be useful to his salvation.' MILNER (vol. i. 434.) says, 'The decision of *Cyprian* is, doubtless, that, which piety and good sense would unite to dictate in the case.' I beg leave to request those who have dancing-masters, card players, teachers of profane music, &c. in their congregations, to take this matter into serious consideration. Moreover, the discipline of the primitive church was not confined to the *lower orders* of the people, but even *rulers*, when they joined it, were required to yield obedience to its laws; a notable instance of this appears in the case of the Emperor THEODOSIUS, who had ordered the massacre of some rioters at *Thessalonica* (A. D 392.) after he had promised *Ambrose* their pardon. On this occasion AMBROSE wrote him a faithful letter, reminding him of the charge in the prophecy, that if the priest does not warn the wicked, he shall be answerable for it. (Ezek. iii. 18.) 'You discover a zeal, (says he,) for the faith and fear of God, I own: but your temper is warm, soon to be appeased, indeed, if endeavours are used to calm it; but if not regulated, it bears down all before it.' He argues the example of David, and shews the impropriety of *communicating* with him at present, 'I love you, (says he,) I cherish you, I pray for you; but blame me not, if I give the preference to God.' On these principles *Ambrose* refused to admit *Theodosius* into the church of *Milan*. The Emperor pleaded the case of David. 'Imitate him, (says the zealous bishop,) in his *repentance*, as well as in his sin.' This exhortation was not in vain, for *Theodosius* submitted himself to the discipline of the church. (See MILNER, vol. ii. 202.) But it was not always the lot of faithful ministers to find Princes willing to *submit* themselves to the laws

laws of Christ. About A. D. 833, *FREDERIC* of *Devonshire*, was appointed bishop of Utrecht in Holland ; and dining one day with the Emperor, *LEWIS* the *Meek*, was exhorted by him to discharge his office with faithfulness and integrity. The bishop, pointing to a fish on the table, asked whether it was proper to take hold of it by the head or by the tail? ‘ By the head, *to be sure*,’ replied the Emperor, ‘ Then I must begin my career of faithfulness, (answered *Frederic*,) with your Majesty.’ He then proceeded to rebuke the Emperor for an incestuous connection, which he openly maintained with *Judith* the Empress, and in the spirit of John the Baptist, told him, “ that it was not lawful for him to have her.” *Lewis* had not expected this salute ; and like Herod, was not disposed to give up his *Herodias*. And no sooner did the Empress hear of this rebuke, than, in the true spirit of an incensed adultress, she began to plot the destruction of *Frederic* ; and at length she effected it by the help of *assassins*. (*Ib.* vol. iii. 231.) Happy would it be for the church of Christ in this day, if there was more attention paid to the purity of communion, and less respect had to persons ; and it is a notorious fact that merely declaring who ought *not* to come forwards to the Lord’s table, will frequently be ineffectual to keep back *scandalous* sinners.

3. Let us proceed to a consideration of the *decay* of discipline in the church of Christ. Dr OWEN (as before,) considers that discipline decayed very materially in the churches of Christ in the fourth and fifth centuries, from the two principal causes assigned by *Ambrose*, viz. the *NEGLIGENCE* of the *people*, and the *AMBITION* of the *clergy*. During this period, whole towns, cities, yea, and nations, offered at once to join themselves unto the church. But it is evident they were not wrought upon by the same *power*, nor induced by the same *motives*, nor led by the same *means* with those who formerly, under persecutions, were converted unto the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was sadly manifested in the lives and conversation of the most of them. Hence those who were *wise* quickly understood that what the church had gained in *multitude*, it had lost in the *beauty and glory* of its holy profession. *Chrysostom*, in particular

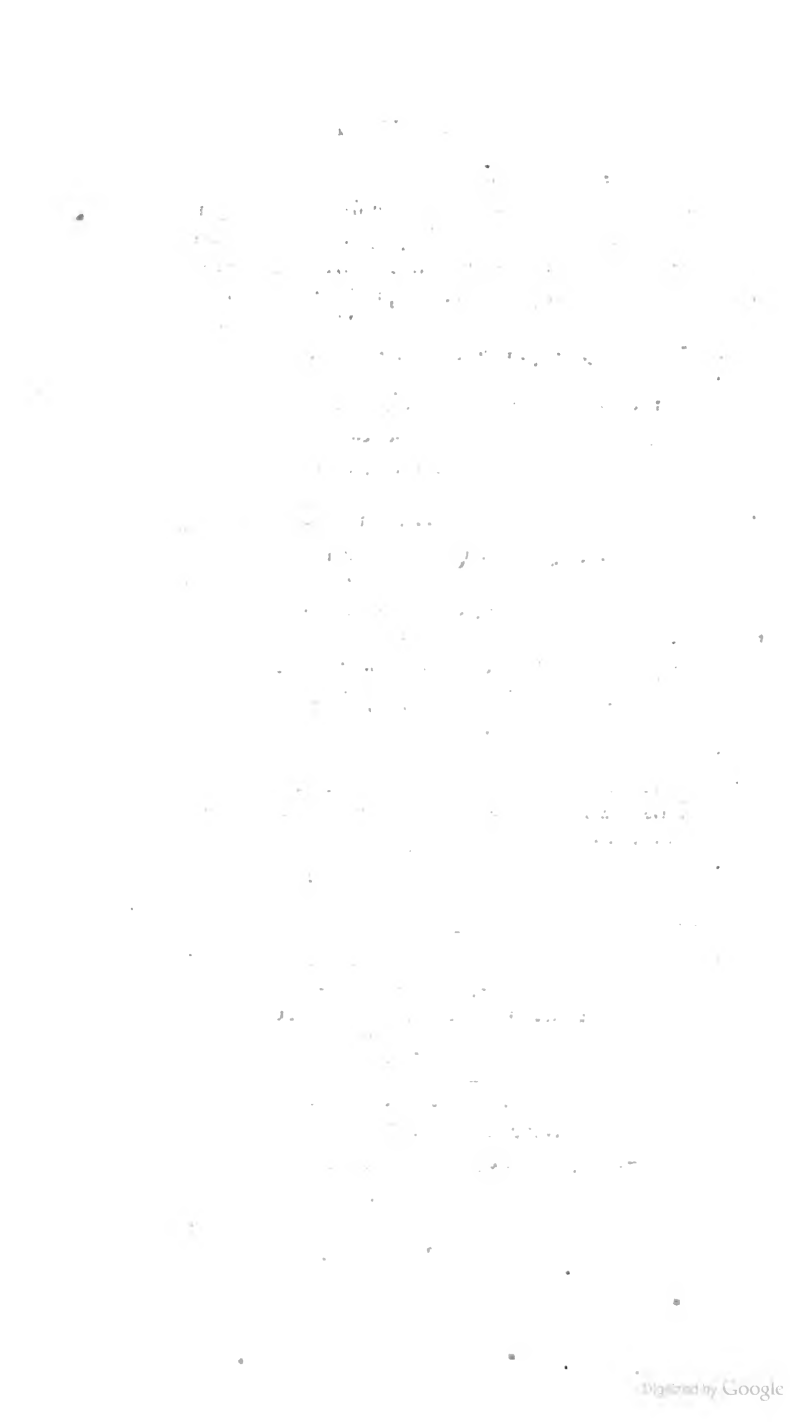
cular, complains of it frequently, and in many places cries out, 'What have I to do with this *multitude*?—a few *serious* believers are more worth than them all.' However, the guides of the church thought meet to receive these multitudes; for thereby their own power, authority, dignity, and revenues, were *enlarged* and mightily *increased*. On this occasion, the ancient and primitive way of admitting members into the church being relinquished, the consideration of their *personal qualifications* and real *conversion to God* omitted, such multitudes were received, as could not partake in all the acts and duties with those particular churches with which they were connected; and the most of them being unfit to be ruled by the power and influence of the commands of Christ in their minds and consciences, it was impossible but that a great alteration would ensue in the original state, order, and rule of the churches. Speaking of this period, in which Arian doctrines caused such violent contentions, MILNER, (vol. ii. 90.) observes that, 'Christian godliness continued very low in all this period; and good men in their writings and reflections, attended too little to the connection which subsists between doctrine and practice.' Thus in the heat of controversy, the discipline of the church of Christ was suffered to *decline*. Also, (as OWEN observes,) 'At the Protestant Reformation, little regard was paid thereto. Those great and worthy persons who were called to that work, exerted themselves principally against the false doctrine and idolatrous worship of the church of Rome; judging, that if these were removed, the people, by the efficacy of truth, and order of worship, would be recovered from the evil of their ways, and primitive holiness be restored among them.' And alas! what numbers in our day are allowed to come forward to the table of the Lord, being thus acknowledged as *members* of Christ; who neglect to *instruct* their families in the doctrines of the gospel, and moreover are living in various *excesses*. Such characters, are the "wood, hay, and stubble," professors, that increase the *bulk* but add nothing to the *strength* of God's house: but the fire of *persecution*, when it rages, discovers these characters, by burning them *out* of the church; and at length the fire

fire of God's *wrath* will consume them from having any more a name amongst his acknowledged people. Great Head of the church, grant a revival of Christian *discipline* in our societies, that no members may remain among us but those who resemble silver, gold, and precious stone, able to abide the fiery test, and meet to adorn the city, of which it is testified the buildings are of "jasper and gold."

IV. I beg leave to ADDRESS, in a few words, *Ministers, Elders, &c.* and the *People*. *Ministers*, should rejoice in the opportunities their office affords them of doing good to the church of God—not to be discouraged from a faithful discharge of their duty on account of opposition—and look forward to the recompence of reward. *Church Officers* in their respective stations, should lay themselves out to be helpers together with the regular ministers of the church—affectionately watch over the people—observe when any absent themselves from the means, and inform themselves of the reason of such absence—endeavour to reclaim the fallen—notice when any are brought under serious impressions by attending the means, and give them suitable advice and exhortation—give a faithful report at the church meetings of any irregularities they have discovered—speak respectfully of their fellow helpers—pray for, and by all means seek to promote the peace of the church. Those *People* should be thankful who enjoy the advantage of wholesome discipline—never think the visits and enquiries of their officers impertinent—on no account suffer themselves to speak lightly of their office-bearers,—and receive no accusation that may be brought against them, except it be established by two or three creditable witnesses. (1 Tim. v. 19)

FINIS.

N. B. The Church of *Sardis*, and SOLOMON'S *Portraiture of Old Age*, are expected to be ready for delivery, early in May 1813.



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AND
EXPOSING THE FOLLY THEREOF.

By SAMUEL KITTLE,
Minister of the Gospel.

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and in truth."
(John iv. 24.)

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CHURCH OF SARDIS,

Part First.

OR,

A LECTURE ON REVELATION,

CHAP. III. VER. 1—5.

And unto the angel of the church in Sardis, write ; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars ; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die : for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments ; and they shall walk with me in white : for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment ; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

IN explaining this Epistolary address to the angel of the church of Sardis, I shall observe the usual order, and consider,

- I. The emblematical *representation* of the Lord Christ.
- II. The *character* of the church.

A

III.

III. The *exhortation* given them.

IV. The *inducements* held out to the church members.

I. The emblematical manner in which the Lord Christ speaks of himself in this Epistle ; is, as *He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.* (v 1.) The number *seven* in this passage is used, either in allusion to the number of *churches* to whom these Epistles were originally addressed ; or else as a *mystical* number significant of *fullness* : (the word *seven* is derived from שבע, *sabang*, *softened into savaṇ or seven* ; denoting *sufficiency, fullness, &c.*) Indeed, both these senses may be considered as uniting in one, as the seven apocalyptical churches, afford a full delineation of the character of all professed Christian churches, as they are found to exist in any given age of the world, or in any nation on the face of the earth ; for all varieties of character, that *are, have been, or ever shall be* found to exist, are but so many different *species* that may be ranked under one or another of these seven *generical* divisions. This being premised, I shall proceed to explain, 1. What is meant by Christ *having the seven Spirits of God.* By this assertion, I understand the Lord Jesus, in his official capacity of *Head of the Church*, affirms that the Spirit in all His plenitude of operations, is at his disposal, to *give* it unto, or *withdraw* it from an individual, or a people, as seems right in his sight. The Lord Christ promised to send the Spirit after his departure to his disciples, saying, “ It is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, *I will send him* unto you.” After His resurrection from the dead, the Lord commanded his disciples, saying, “ Depart not from Jerusalem, but wait for the *promise of the Father*, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.” And, according to this promise, when the day of Pentecost was fully come, the disciples being all assembled with one accord in one place, “ suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house (or apartment,) where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it (*i. e.* a flame of fire) sat upon each of them : and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance ;”

terance;" *i. e.* each in that *language*, as well as in that *manner*, in which the Spirit thus miraculously instructed them. *St Paul*, speaking of the various operations of the Spirit in the church, for the good of the body of Christ, and of mankind at large; says, in reference to His having ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and given gifts to men, that he poured out these gifts in rich variety, "and he gave some, Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, Evangelists; and some Pastors and Teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, &c." By these means, He qualified his ministering servants for the various offices to which he called them in his church. Thus it appears that the Lord Christ has the Spirit, in all his fullness of operation, at his disposal, and can give forth or withhold the influences thereof according to his pleasure. How thankful should we be for his gracious operations, and what care should individuals and churches take, that they do not provoke Him to withdraw his Spirit from them; since every profitable gift and advantageous grace depends upon his favourable presence.

2. Christ is also said to *have*, or hold *the seven stars*, *i. e.* the seven angels or *ministers* of the seven churches, (*See Ch. i. 20.*) who like stars, or planets which shine by *reflecting* the rays of the natural sun; shine in virtue of the grace afforded them by the Sun of Righteousness, to the benefit of the church of the living God. The Lord Christ by the hand of his power, which upholdeth all things, (*See Heb. i. 3.*) *sustains* according to his pleasure, his ministering servants in their respective stations, notwithstanding the opposition they are exposed to from earth and hell; and he *operates* not only *in*, but also *by them*, in carrying on his gracious purposes among the children of men, in his gospel kingdom. (*See Church of EPHESUS, Pt. I. § i. 1.*) As all the planets depend upon the sun, both for *support* and *light*, and cannot keep the stations appointed to them among the heavenly bodies, or give forth one ray of light, except they are acted upon by that luminary for this purpose; (*See PIKE's Philosophia Sacra.*) So all ministers of the gospel, let their talents for usefulness be what they may, can no longer preserve their station, or emit one ray of heavenly light, than as the Lord Christ is pleased to *support*

port them and *do good by* them. Thus Christ informs the society at Sardis, that the ministers of all the churches resemble stars, that He *holds*; all their *persons*, all their *gifts*, all their *usefulness*, depending entirely upon his will. Thus they of Sardis, and all churches are taught, to acknowledge the goodness of the Lord in raising them up able ministers of the new covenant, and in crowning their labours with success; and thus we learn that ministers will either be removed from, or their labours rendered ineffectual to those, who by formality in religious worship, have provoked the Lord to withdraw the influences of his quickening Spirit. Lord grant, that our eyes may see our teachers; that our ears may hear their voice, saying, this is the way, walk ye in it; and that special miracles of grace, may be wrought among us by their instrumentality.

It would not be proper to omit noticing the connection observed in the *Text*, of the seven *spirits of God*, with the *seven stars*. A Lamp, a Star, or indeed any Luminary, may be considered in two views, *viz. First*, As it is an instrument formed with a *design* to emit light; and *Secondly*, as it is actually employed in *giving forth* the light it was formed with a design to emit. It is very easy to conceive in the mind, of a candle or lamp, as a *designed* instrument of light, being distinct from the *luminous rays* it is caused to emit, under particular circumstances, *i. e.* when it is *light up*, as we speak. It is as easy to form an idea of an opaque and dark body; the moon, or one of the planets for instance, formed for *reflecting* the light thrown upon it by the agency of the natural sun, but as having no light of its own to emit, and only shining bright in *borrowed* rays. We have been so accustomed perhaps in our conceptions of the sun, and of the rays of light, that he is the *instrument* of diffusing all around him; to conceive of the *body* of that luminary, and his *light* as being one and inseparable, as to forget that no sun, but the *Uncreated SUN*, shines with his *own* light. That the body of the sun, is nothing more than an *instrument* formed by Omnipotence, on such a principle, and placed in such a relative situation, with respect to the other orbs, as to arrest and emit the subtle principle of which light is composed; plainly appears

pears from this fact, that the light was produced on the *first* day of creation ; but it was not until the *fourth* day, that God made those two great *instruments* of light, the sun and the moon, which together with the stars, formed at the same time, he placed in the firmament of heaven, in order that they might give light upon the earth. (See Gen. i. 3. and 14—17.) Perhaps light depends upon a certain state of the *Electric Fluid*, which pervades every part of universal nature ; and the sun placed in the centre of the system is the grand agent, in giving the necessary *action* to this subtle fluid. The connection of this critique with the text, is the manner in which it tends to illustrate the connection of the *seven spirits of God* with the *seven stars*, and the dependence the *light* of the latter has upon the afforded *influence* of the former. The seven *Lamp-flames*, *Stars*, or *Angels* of the churches are all connected with one fount of living oil, which feeds their flame ; or, all as so many Planets shine forth in rays of heavenly light, communicated to them by the Spirit of holiness that proceeds forth from that Uncreated Sun, who is the Light of life. (See Zech. Ch. iv. Rev. i. 12, 20.) The seven Stars, or Ministers, therefore, are the seven *instruments* of light, which the Spirit made use of to *illuminate* the seven churches of Asia Minor. The Spirit shone *by* them, and they shone *through* Him. O Lord, still bless thy church, “also clothe her priests with thy salvation,” say unto them, “Arise, shine ; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee ;” yea, make those, who are called, “the *messengers* of the churches, and the *glory* of Christ,” Lights in the world, even as thou, O Lord, art “the Light of the world.”

II. The character of this church is given in the following words. *I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead ; be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die : for I have not found thy work perfect before God.* (v. i. 2.) From these words we learn that their character was *fair* among men ; but he who *knew them altogether*, saw little among them but a *form* of religion, without the *power* of godliness ; the little good that was in them, being in a state of decline, from their not having sought to be *filled* with all the fruits

fruits of the Spirit. But at the same time, the Lord bears honourable testimony, that some were to be found in their community of a more excellent stamp ; for he adds, *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments.* (v. 4.)

1. Their character stood *fair* among their brethren, who judging by outward appearance, (as all, but He that searcheth the heart must necessarily do,) considered them as being *living members* of the mystical body of Christ : according to the meaning of those words, *Thou hast a name that thou livest.* It may tend to the illustration of the supposed character of the church of Sardis, if we turn our attention for a moment, to the union of *matter* and *spirit*, so far as our knowledge extends to the union which subsists between them, in an organized frame. *Matter*, which is composed of *solid, massy, impenetrable*, and *moveable* particles, or atoms, is, in itself, *sluggish*, and inactive ; but *spirit*, by which in a lower sense, and used emblematically, is meant those subtle fluids, (of which the electric fire is the chief,) that are the grand promoters of animate and inanimate motion ; *exerts its power* upon matter according to the fixed laws of organization. Hence *inert* matter, when wrought into the organic structure of any compound body, assumes the appearance of *life* and activity, according to the laws of that system of which it now composes a part. An animal which is furnished with a brain, spinal marrow, and the dependant system of nerves, has not only a large portion of matter, to which the animal spirits have given activity, wrought into its frame ; but also, by means of the nervous system which conveys sensation to one common sensorium, is present in every part of the animated frame, and sensible of every impression made thereon from whatever cause it arises. To pass over political, and ecclesiastical bodies, which under the management of some ruling power, gives a new organization to the persons wrought into the same, the governing power extending ruling influence to the remotest part of this disciplined society, and receiving by means of its appointed officers, (that answer to the nerves in the animal body,) intimations of every important occurrence ; I shall proceed to a moment's consideration of the mystical body of Christ. This body, I trust my attentive readers,

readers, will by this time be pretty well prepared to investigate, as bearing striking analogy in many respects to the bodies already noticed. This assertion is according to the reasoning of St Paul, who exhorts the children of God, to steadiness in their religious profession, saying "Grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying (or building up,) of itself in love." In this passage Christ is represented as the Head of *influence*, who takes believers into union with himself; though before this they had no more spiritual union with him, than the matter which the animal body, for instance, unites into itself, in order to its growth. (See Kittle's *KING SOLOMON'S Portraiture of Old Age*.) This body, composed of believers, (who have apprehended or laid hold of Christ, by faith divinely wrought in them;) God lives in, by his animating Spirit, supplying each individual member according to the necessities of his case, and using him as a living member of his mystical body, in promoting his gracious designs among the children of men. Happy they who are thus in Christ, and he in them; such characters, and such alone, are possessed of spiritual *life*, and can say with the great apostle, to the comfort of their souls, and to the glory of God's grace: "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Lord God, grant unto us, that being apprehended by Christ Jesus, we also as "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," may be numbered among, "those that are alive from the dead." Happy, thrice happy! those, whom Christ acknowledg-
es as being *one* with Him.

2. But high as the professors of the church of Sardis stood in the *estimation* of the Christian charity of their brethren around them, He whose Spirit animates every member of his mystical body, and is perfectly acquainted with the state of each individual, (answering to *atom* in the human body,) that composes it; testified concerning them, that though they had a
name

name that they *lived*, they were actually *dead*, i. e. in a dying, declining state, fast sinking into formality. That it is a *comparative* state of death that is meant, is clear from the exhortation given ver. 2. to *be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die*. Such an exhortation, is only suited to the case of those who have had a *principle* of grace communicated unto them ; while those persons who are in a state of *nature*, are called upon to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. To avoid every thing of a controversial kind, as far as is possible, I shall only observe, (let him that readeth understand, and take warning :) That those who have been *made partakers* of a gracious principle, are in danger of sinking into a state of spiritual death.

3. They had suffered this sad loss in their souls, because they had neglected to press after the enjoyment of a fulness of the influences of the divine Spirit ; *for*, thus saith the Lord, *I have not found thy work perfect, or filled up, before God*. (See *πληρω*, Pleroo, *to fill, fill up, complete, perfect*.) A principle of grace had been communicated unto them of the mercy of God ; or, as we may say, the *outlines* of the divine nature was delineated on their souls, when they were accepted in Christ, but this principle could only be matured by means of habitual communion with the Father and the Son through the eternal Spirit, i. e. the beautiful traits of the heavenly nature, could only be made to shine in all their lovely colours, through the powerful effect of constant and intimate fellowship with Christ, by means of which the gracious soul is changed “ into the same image from glory unto glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.” But they had not thus *followed on to know the Lord*, desirous that they might “ be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height : and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fullness of God,” Alas ! they had lost sight of this invaluable blessing, of regaining the *fullness* of the divine image, and resting satisfied in what they had already experienced of the operation of grace upon their hearts, they had well nigh sunk into mere formalists ; the few good desires that remained of enjoying spiri-
tual

tual communion with God, being just *ready to expire*. My Christian brethren ! ever remember that your souls are declining in health, when you cease earnestly to long after God, and abate in the intenseness of your hungering and thirsting after larger measures of his righteousness. Lord preserve us from sinking into a state of spiritual decline. But, may we “*grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord, and Saviour Jesus Christ.*”

4. Concerning the *spiritual* members of this church, spoken of as *a few names even in Sardis*, who had *not defiled their garments*. By *names*, is meant persons whose names were *registered* in their church-books, as being members of that Christian society. These church-books, answered to the civil lists or registers in which the names of the citizens, in well ordered states, were enrolled. Among the primitive Christians they were called *Diptycha*, or *Matricula*, and contained all the names of the church members, as the registers among the Jews used to do of all that belonged to the twelve tribes of Israel. As those who had their names *enrolled* in the registers of the Jewish and Gentile cities were admitted to the *privileges* of that city, and required to *submit* themselves to the regulations of its policy ; so those who upon believing in Christ, were enrolled in the *Diptycha* of a Christian society, were entitled to all the privileges of that society, considered as a part of the church of Christ ; and also became subject to the laws of his kingdom. It is recorded to the praise of a few persons, whose *names were registered* in the *Diptycha* of the church of Sardis, that they had *not defiled their garments*, i. e. the *white* robes with which they were invested, at their baptism. Fine linen, *white* and *clean*, is spoken of, Rev. xix. 8. as being emblematical of the *righteousness of saints* : hence those who believed, being on the profession of their faith, baptised into Christ, were considered according to Gal. iii. 27, as *putting on the purity of the Lord Jesus Christ* ; and it was customary, to invest them with *white* raiment, as symbolical of the *purity* of that religion, into the profession of which they were baptised. A *clean* and *white* garment is certainly very expressive of that *holy, harmless, and benevolent* principle which Christ implants in the hearts of his believing people. It is an historical fact, that

perhaps is not known to all my readers, that from this custom of investing the newly baptised with *white* garments, the feast of Pentecost, as being one of the annual seasons of baptism, came to be called Whitsunday, i. e. *White-sunday*. After these *clean white* garments had been worn by the baptised for a season, they were received from them by the hands of the church officers, appointed for this purpose, and carefully laid up in the church; both that they might remind those who worshipped there, of the *purity* in which they were called to walk, and also to serve as an *evidence against* such persons as violated their engagements, or denied that faith, which they had professed in baptism. In allusion to this practice of the primitive church, respecting baptised adults, it was appointed by the first common prayer book of KING EDWARD, that after an infant had been baptized by immersion, the minister should put on the child, the *white* vestment commonly called *Chrysom*, and say ‘Take this *white* vesture, as a token of the *innocency*, which, by God’s grace, in this holy sacrament of baptism, is given unto thee; (i. e. figuratively given to thee,) and for a sign, whereby thou art admonished so long as thou livest, to give thyself to *innocence* of living, that after this transitory life thou mayest be a partaker of life everlasting. Amen.’ (See PANTOLOGIA, *Baptism*.) As a confirmation that *white* was generally worn by the newly baptised, see MILNER, in his *Church History*, Vol. ii. p. 290; who mentions about 3000 Catechumens, belonging to the Church of *Constantinople*, who having been baptised the preceding day, assembled together in a meadow near the city, clothed in *white* garments. This was in the *Fifth Century*, when *Chrysostom* was Bishop of Constantinople. And to this day, the *Syrian* clergy who inhabit the interior of *Travancore* and *Malabar*, in the South of *India*, appear habited in *white*. (See BUCHANAN’S *Christian Researches*, p. 99. 108. 110.) And it is highly probable that they received their dress, which is a white loose vestment, with a cap of red silk, from the Christian clergy of the city of *Antioch* by whose instrumentality, it appears, the gospel was at first planted in the *East Indies*, and by whom the *Cassanars*, or Syrian clergy, have all along been furnished with a succession of

of Christian Bishops. The care that is necessary to keep a fine *white* garment *clean*, and free from spot; aptly points out the watchfulness, prayer, and continual purifyings of the Holy Spirit, that is requisite in order to preserve a gracious soul free from polluting defilements of flesh or spirit in this wicked world. And let it be observed, that it is not sufficient that the garment should appear *white* on the *surface* of the cloth, which it may be made to do, though really stained and defiled; but in order to *cleanliness*, it is necessary to keep the inward *texture* thereof *pure* and *white*. A quotation from KENNETT'S *Roman Ant.* Pt. II. Book v. Ch. 8. will illustrate my meaning. 'As to the holidays, on which we find the Romans always attired in *white*, it is reasonable to believe, that all persons of any fashion put on new gowus, which were of the *purest white*; while those of meaner condition might perhaps *chalk over their old gowns*, which were now grown *rusty*,' &c. As in this case the surface of the cloth was only *daubed* over with *white*, while the garment itself was *stained* with dirt; so the great majority of professors belonging to the church of Sardis, had their hearts defiled, their passions polluted with the filth of the world, at the same time that they endeavoured to keep up appearances, like these ignoble Romans, by as fair an outside as they could make shift to display, by means of the miserable daubing they substituted instead of the *pure white* robes of their nobler countrymen. A device this, that in the one case, would ill serve to conceal the stains and filth the garment had contracted; and that in the other case, cannot in the least deceive the piercing of eyes of Him, who *searcheth the hearts and tryeth the reins* of the children of men. The Lord be merciful unto us, "and make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Oh! that it may be granted us, that being accepted in the Beloved," we may walk with him in purity of heart and life, being "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

III. The *Exhortation* to the declining members of this church, runs in the following strain. *Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I have not found*
thy

thy work perfect before God. *Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard ; and hold fast and repent.* (v. 2, 3.) In these words they are called, To the *vigilance* of self-knowledge—to *earnestness* of desire after maturity of grace—to a *recollection* of what they had *heard* and *felt*, in the beginning of their Christian profession—they are exhorted not to *despair* of being enabled to recover their former light and power ; but to *hold fast* every good remaining desire they felt, as the earnest of abundant supplies of grace, from the fountain of life,—and to be found *engaging* in that course of Christian conduct which would demonstrate them to be true penitents. I shall turn your attention for a moment to each of these particulars, as standing connected with the health of their souls.

1. They are commanded to be *watchful*, or *vigilant* in gaining a good degree of *self-knowledge*, of which they were sadly deficient, as appears from their being content with a *name* to live, while they were *dead*, or destitute of the *power* of godliness. Those professors who would know themselves, or gain a just view of their character before God, must not only watch over their outward *conduct*, that it be moral and evangelical ; but they must also take into the account, how their *affections* are engaged in behalf of God and his cause. This spirituality of self-examination, when vigilantly attended to, will be made greatly useful to the soul in preserving it from formality, and keeping it humble at the divine footstool. Lord help us to “ examine ourselves,” and do thou, O Lord ! assist us in this work, yea, “ Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” For want of this examination, many, it is to be feared, who are uniform in their conduct, and even zealous to extend the bounds of Christ’s kingdom, enjoy but little of the power of godliness in their own souls ! “ Lord is it I,” that am in this state ? May watchfulness and self examination be our daily employment.

2. They are exhorted to *strengthen the things which remain*, that are ready to die, i. e. earnestly to desire, the *maturity* of those graces that had been implanted in their souls by those Spirit
of

of holiness, but which were now in a state of decay. Believers, considered as members of the mystical body of Christ, when closely united unto him by faith, are *used* by him in promoting the interest of his spiritual kingdom in the world; and as they enter into the views of Christ, and engage fervently in his cause, they become stronger and stronger in grace, and like healthy limbs of the animal body, are more fitted to their various employments. But should the *hold* which believers have of Christ by faith, become *enfeebled*, the influence of his Spirit on such an one is proportionably diminished; and these characters come to resemble withering branches, or decaying members that are *ready to die* out of the body unto which they are so feebly united. As every sinful desire, drives at the total defilement of the soul; so every gracious principle has a tendency to renovate the soul in all its powers; and lamentable is the state of that professor in whom the implanted principle of grace is going to decay. Lord save us from such a state, giving us grace to pray, with the apostle, saying, O "that I may know Him, and the power of his resurrection;" and praised be the God of our salvation, this we shall prove, "if we follow on to know the Lord," since the Saviour has pronounced those "blessed which do hunger and thirst after righteousness," saying, "for they shall be filled." Restore my soul, O Lord, and lead me in the paths of righteousness, for thy name's sake. (Ps. xxiii. 3.)

3. In order to their *recovery* of a state of spiritual health, they are called upon to *remember how they had received and heard*: i. e. to call to mind *how they had heard* the Gospel; and what *powerful impressions* its apprehended truths had upon their minds, in the beginning of their Christian profession. And surely it would be a means both of *humbling* their souls before the Lord, and of *quicken*ing their desires after the enjoyment of renewed and enlarged communications of his grace, to call to mind the *amazement, attention, desire, humility, gratitude, and zeal*, with which, on their first apprehension of gospel truths, they were inspired. The following passages of Scripture, tend to illustrate these early feelings. The Lord grant, that they who hitherto are strangers to them, may *attain* them; that those who felt them

them once, but have lost them, may *regain* them: and those who live in the growing enjoyment thereof, should ever say, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing, and give praise." With *amazement* they cried out, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" The *attention* of their minds to divine truth, was like that of *Mary* at the feet of Jesus, and the language of their hearts was, "Speak, (Lord,) for thy servant heareth." The *desire* of the soul went out after God, saying, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Then they were little in their own estimation; and in *humility* of soul, said with David, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" With *gratitude*, they then cried, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name." And then, glowing with *zeal* for the honour of God, and the good of mankind, their enquiry was, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

4. They are exhorted to *strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die*. Thus they are encouraged, not to give way to *desponding* thoughts; but, on the contrary, to be thankful for, and hold fast every remaining *desire* they felt towards God, or measure of *delight* they at times experienced in the ways of religion; as being at once merciful proofs that the Lord had not quite *forsaken* them; and also as affording them rational ground of hope, that he would yet *hear* their prayers, *heal* their backslidings, and *restore* unto them the joy of his salvation. Concerning every backslider, we must say, it is "an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God." Such conduct is highly *ungrateful*, and exceedingly *wicked*; and the natural consequence thereof is overwhelming *darkness* of mind, and keen *anguish* of spirit. Should any one who reads these pages be such a character, know that you are deeply *wounded* by the envenomed arrows of the great adversary; who also has taken you prisoner, and leads you as his miserable *captive*, in chains. *Sad*, indeed, is your case, but do not lie down in *despair*; do not say there is *no hope* of being set at liberty again;

again; since this would lay you under a strong temptation to renounce your allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ, and enter *volunteer* with the prince of darkness, as those persons of old did, who saying, "There is no hope: no, for I have loved strangers," came to the following dreadful resolution, "and after them will I go." Do not thus become desperate through despair, but look unto Him for salvation from your miserable condition, who "proclaims liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Oh, look to Him! for He can rescue the prey from the *mighty*, and grant deliverance to the *lawful* captive. (See Isai. xlix. 25.) But perhaps, it is not so much from your *enemies*, strong and watchful as they are, as from your own *hearts*, that are cooled in their attachment to the Saviour's person and interest, that you have to fear the continuance of your bondage. This, indeed, is the grand evil to be dreaded, since Satan, with all his power, cannot make one soul his captive without he first gains over the *Will*; and since this is the way he gained the advantage against the captivated soul at first, no wonder that his grand effort should be to engage the Will more *fully*, and to entangle the Affections, (which Affections, or Passions, may be considered as so many *modifications* of the Will,) in the pursuit of objects which lead the soul *away* from God and his salvation. Alas! your condition is *lamentable* and *alarming*, since your very *desires* after spiritual communion with the Redeemer *are ready to die*; yet *hold fast* those feeble desires which you sometimes feel drawn out after him, and look to the Lord, by the aid of whose grace you may yet be able to *strengthen the things* (the desires and hopes) *which remain*, though only like a *dying* Spark, or a withering *Root*. Yea, know, O fallen professor! that He who reproves thee has mercy in store for thee; his very reproofs are in mercy, being sent home by his word and Spirit, with a gracious design of *awakening* thee to a sense of thy condition before him, of kindling thy *relentings* on account of thy backslidings, and again *engaging* thy affections in behalf of God and his salvation. Oh, bless the Lord, that as "There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender

tender bud thereof will not cease;" that, "Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet, through the *scent* (or *gentle touch* and influence. See TAYLOR'S *Hebrew Concordance*, ריח § 15.) of *water*, it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant:" so, also, thy soul, though dead and barren, may yet be caused to flourish again, through the blessed influence of the water of life, which God pours out from above in order to *refresh* the weary, and *revive* the faint-hearted. Again, I say, be thankful for the smallest measure of *gracious influence*, and rejoice in it as the earnest of a more abundant supply from the Spirit of holiness. I would recommend all who are declined in their souls to cherish the *self-abasing* and *soul-reviving* sentiments of the following verse:

" I never shall rise
To my first paradise,
Or come my Redeemer to see;
But I feel a faint *hope*
That at last He will stoop,
And his *pity* shall bring him to me." (Wesley.)

5. They are called upon to *repent*. Repentance, as has been explained in the foregoing Lectures, (See *Ephesus*, Part I. § iii. 2.) is 'after-thought, or the soul recollecting its own *actings*; and that in such a manner as to produce sorrow in the review, and a desire of *amendment*.' With whomsoever such *sorrow* for the past, and *desire* to act better for the time to come is found, they will be bringing forth both the inward and outward *fruits* of repentance; according as John the Baptist exhorted his hearers to "bring forth *fruits* worthy of repentance." The *fruits* of repentance which these cold and formal professors should bring forth to God; are such as, *Deploring their Guilt*, with penitential sorrow; being ashamed and distressed that they have added to the number of those of whom the Lord complains, saying, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."—*Confessing their Helplessness*, with deep humiliation of soul, saying, with *Jeremiah*, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his

his steps." And adding, We will no more walk in the light of our own fire, nor in the sparks which we have kindled : O Lord, we will cover ourselves no more with any covering, but that of thy Spirit. (See Isai. l. 11.—xxx. 1.)—*Earnestly praying* for the assistance of His grace, saying, "Lord have mercy upon us;" or, "Lord save us : we perish;" urging your plea, by adding, with humble trust in the mercy of God, "Lord if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."—*Humbly dedicating* yourselves to God, offering him your heart and your life to be henceforth devoted a living sacrifice to him, rendered acceptable to God when offered in dependance on the merits of Christ, and by the afforded aid of the Spirit of Holiness. As sure as any one surrenders himself up to the influence of the Holy Spirit, so sure will he be led by the Spirit to *breath* those desires, and *attend* to those things which are pleasing in the sight of the Most High. This truth is pointed out by St Paul, in Rom. vi. 16. where he says, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, (or yield obedience) whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" the end of which *righteousness*, he adds, v. 22, is "everlasting life." But all those who continue in a state of *sin*, *impenitency*, and *formality*, are "treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." O then, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto him, take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously : so will we render the calves of our lips," *i. e.* our grateful praises.

IV. The *Inducements* held out to this society of professing Christians are of a *mixed* nature; suited to the different states of the church members, assembling for public worship in the city of Sardis. *First*, they are dreadfully *alarming* to the Formalists, But, *Secondly*, Highly *encouraging* to the pious members of this religious community.

(I.) The Lord addresses himself to the *fears* of the Formal, in the following tremendous words. If therefore thou shalt not watch, *I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.* Here, let it be remarked, that be-

lievers are considered in the light of Virgins espoused, or promised in marriage, to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Heavenly Bridegroom, (*See 2 Cor. xi. 2.*) Being thus espoused to the Lord, it is required of them, that they keep themselves free from every *pollution* that would *defile* their persons, and from every *affection* that would *estrangle* their hearts, from God their Redeemer; that, after a season, they may be “presented as *chaste virgins* unto Christ,” and have it granted them in that day, when the church shall appear, “arrayed in fine linen, clean and white,” being emblematical of the righteousness of saints, “to be acknowledged as the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” But those professors whose hearts are gone away from the Lord, are considered by him as being false to their marriage covenant, and guilty of spiritual *adultery*. (*See James iv. 4.*) Hence those *contracted virgins*, who do not watch against the stratagems of the wicked one, by means of which he seeks to destroy the love of God out of the soul; but who suffer themselves, in spite of every admonition, to be beguiled and corrupted by the subtlety of the serpent, through which he beguiled Eve; come under the displeasure of the “*jealous God*,” who will avenge the insult offered to his love, and come *suddenly* upon the unreclaimed offenders to execute his wrath, cutting them off amidst the filthy *revels* of their polluted affections. For thus saith the Lord, *as the thief* surprises and suddenly carries off his plunder, so, in an *hour*, when thou art not aware of it, *I will come upon thee*. In these awful words, the Lord, as the Holy One of Israel, threatens to expose their defilements, and avenge the breach of his covenant. O professor of religion! look to it, that thy Will be *one* with God’s, and thy Affections *warm* towards the heavenly Bridegroom; or know, thou art rejected like “an *abominable branch* ;” and that having been often reprov’d, and yet hardening thy neck, thou shalt “suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

(II.) The pious lovers of the Lord, are encouraged to *perseverance* in evangelical Holiness, by the following gracious promises. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in *white* :
for

for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment;—and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Designing, hereafter, to explain the nature of the evangelical *worthiness* of the Saints, considered as living members of the mystical body of Christ; I shall only observe, that the phrase *they are worthy*, is significant of what is *fit, suitable, becoming*, i. e. in connection with the manner in which, through divine grace, they had conducted themselves, during the time of their Christian conflict and probation upon earth. (See *General Observ.*)

1. Let us in the *first* place consider the promise, made to conquering saints, contained in that part of the inducement to persevering piety. *I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.* This promise consists of *two* parts: being, First, given in the *negative*, and, Secondly, in the *positive* form. The *negative* part of the promise, *I will not blot out his name out of the book of life*, is an allusion to the ancient *Diptycha* or Registers, as before observed, (Church of *Thyatira* Pt. II. § i. 1.) in which the primitive Christians registered the names of their acknowledged church members: as of persons who were *entitled* to enjoy the benefit of every ordinance of the church militant, and who were the apparent *heirs* of everlasting glory. Not to mention instances, from among the Greeks and Romans, of blotting out the names of discarded citizens, from their civil Registers; I shall turn your attention to two or three allusions to this significant transaction, in the holy Scriptures. The children of Israel who came out of Egypt, having their names enrolled in the national Registers, as being God's acknowledged *people*, and the presumptive *heirs* of the land of Canaan: leads us to the meaning of those threatenings to *cut off* from among the people of the Lord, and to *blot out* of the book of God; so often used concerning Israel of old. (See Lev. xvii 10. Deut. ix. 14, &c.) Those who were *blotted out* from the Register of God's people, as *cast off* by him in anger, were *excluded* from having any title to inherit the land of Canaan, and were *given up* to misery and death,

death, as the just demerit of their abominable conduct. So, under the New Testament dispensation, those who have their names inserted in the Register of the Christian society to which they are united, are enrolled there as being of God's spiritual *Israel*, and of course, *heirs* of his eternal glory. (See Rom. viii. 17.) "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, &c." shall be *blotted out* of the Book of LIFE, (the book in which the names of the favourites of heaven and the heirs of glory shine,) and being *rejected* by God as accursed, they "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." Thus, like as the priests whose genealogies were found faulty, or who had any blemishes about them, were sent out of the presence of the Jewish Sanhedrim, clothed and veiled in *black*: (See BURDER'S *Com.* à GILL in loc.) so the discarded soul, covered with the *filth* of its pollutions, (See Zech. iii. 3. and Rev. xxii. 11.) shall, by the Lord of glory, be driven from his presence, with "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." But the *holy* followers of the Lamb, shall be *delivered* by him from sharing in this condemnation: for their names shall not be *blotted out* of the Book of Life; but according to the *positive* part of this promise, be honourably *retained* by the command of the Lord Jesus, as being among the number of those, who are the *acknowledged* heirs of his everlasting glory. And not only so, but He will also make honourable *mention* of their names and pious conduct, in the presence of the holy *angels*, and of God himself; thus recommending his sanctified followers, to their favourable *regard*. Happy, happy souls! who, *accepted* of Christ, and *kept* by his power; shall be thus *honoured* of him, in the day when he judgeth the world. Lord grant us thy salvation: help us to fight the good fight of faith, and may we also overcome through thy blood. But O! miserable condition of those, however high their *office* in his church militant, and however honourably they were *thought of* among their brethren; to whom Christ shall say "I know you not; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity." Lord save us from this condemnation, by granting us the *power* of thy salvation, in addition to a *name* among thy people; blessing us
with

with *purity of heart*, as well as *regularity of life*. Oh may we all ! ever find assistance, to worship Him who is a Spirit, “ in spirit and in truth,” and at last be found among those of whom it is testified they are “ called, and chosen, and faithful.”

2. The Lord promises, moreover, to confer especial honour on those who have not *defiled their garments*, but have walked before him in *purity of heart and life*, having *overcome* the world, the flesh, and the wicked one. Of these characters the Lord Christ says, *the same shall be clothed in white raiment ; and they shall walk with me in white* : for they are worthy. This promise consists of *two parts* : viz. *First*, A simple promise of being *clothed in white raiment*: and, *Secondly*, of being honoured to *walk with* the Lord of Hosts, in this *splendid attire*. *First*, Conquering saints, *shall be clothed in white raiment*. From the connection that subsists between *purity* and *joy*, on the one hand ; and *sin* or *impurity*, and *sorrow* on the other hand, *White* was used as significant of *triumph*, and *Black* upon *mournful* occasions. Hence we read, in the *Roman Antiquities*, (See KENNET, Pt. II. Book iv. Ch. 16.) of King *Perseus* being *clad all in black*, when he walked in the train that graced the triumph of *Æmilius* the Conqueror. Moreover, the *black* in which mourners and captives were clad, was of two kinds, each of which has its proper appellation among the Roman habits. See KENNET, Book V. Ch. viii. where we read, that the *Toga Pulla* was a gown proper to persons in mourning, (as, on account of the loss of relatives, &c.) this was made of black cloth, whence the persons were called *atrati*, or wearing black. But the *Toga Sordida*, was *black* or *blackened* from a different cause, having grown so by the long wearing and *sullying* thereof ; this garment (of discoloured and *filthy white*,) was worn by prisoners at their trial ; and was very expressive of the moral *pollution* they were accused of, and of the *infamy* to which their supposed guilt justly exposed them. The *White Robe*, on the contrary, was *honourable*, being emblematical of *Puberty* as opposed to *nonage* ; of *Joy* as opposed to *sadness* ; and of *Victory* and *Triumph*, as opposed to defeat, and captivity. The following quotations from the afore-mentioned author, will set those truths in a clear point of light.

light. 'The *Toga Pura* was a White garment, without any addition of purple. It had also the name of *Toga Libera*, or the Gown of Liberty; because young men were invested therewith, when they entered on a state of freedom, and were delivered from the power of their tutors and instructors.'—On holidays, or solemn festivals, we find the Romans always attired in *White*.'—In the account of the pompous triumph of *Æmilius*, we are informed that, 'the spectators were clad in *white* garments. And *Juvenal*, describes the Emperor on an occasion of this kind, as attended, with

"Trumpets before, and on the left and right
A cavalcade of Nobles all in *white*." (Dryden.)

(See. Pt. II. Book iv. Ch. xvi. and Book v. Ch. viii.) Thus the promise of being clothed in *White*, is equivalent to that of declaring them *Free* citizens of the New Jerusalem; of introducing them to the enjoyment of everlasting *delight*; and of acknowledging them *Conquerors* in the Christian warfare. Lord grant unto us, this *freedom, joy, and honour*; and we will ascribe all the glory unto thy name, and *cast our crowns before thy throne*, as the Captain of our *salvation*.

Secondly, The Lord, moreover, promises, that his *conquering* followers shall have it granted them to *walk with Him* in *White*. By this part of the promise, I understand some new and *additional* honour is designed to be pointed out, as being conferred upon the pious; by means of which honours the Lord *Jésus*, as the great Captain of the armies which composed the church while *militant*, (it is now represented as *triumphant*,) designs to point out the favoured individual as one that is *high in his esteem*, and that all the nobles of his court should henceforth and for ever treat with *respect*, and acknowledge as a *worthy* member of their order. If receiving a gold ring from *Cæsar*, gave *Laberius* the honour of knighthood, and forced those proud courtiers to permit him to take his *seat* among them; (See *Ibid.* P. II. Book v. ch. 5.) how much more shall the distinguishing regard of Christ, confer celestial honours upon his humble followers, and incline the amiable worthies of heaven gladly to
admit

admit the favourites of their Lord, to share with them that glory which they enjoy as the fruit of his beneficence. The following extract from TAYLOR'S *Lectures* on the Epistles to the Asiatic Churches ; forms an excellent comment upon this part of the promise. " I have heard it said that in the last German war, when the *Duke of Cumberland* commanded the British forces, that he noticed a Private act with great bravery, and therefore gave him a commission. The man, it seems, was modest, as well as valiant, and would have declined the offer of his Royal Highness, and among other things alleged, that the Officers would be *shy* of admitting him to rank with them, especially in the same regiment. The Duke ordered him immediately to be *equipt in the uniform of his rank, and walked arm in arm with him through the lines, in the presence of all the generals, and of the whole army*; this was a sufficient answer to the objection made by the honest soldier ; no officer of any rank (of whatsoever rank he might be,) would be shy with him who was so honourably treated by their General in Chief, and the son of their Sovereign." Such honour will Christ confer upon every one that is *valiant* for the Truth, and they who to the honour of his grace, *walk* among a polluted people in the *white* garments of *holiness* on earth ; shall be honoured by having it granted them, to *walk with him* in the *white* robes of glory, in the presence of his Father, and of the holy angels. What are all the honours of the world, compared to the honours of Christ's kingdom ? Let us pray with St Paul, saying, Oh ! " that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, (renewing our hearts, &c.) and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death ; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead," unto the peculiar *honours* of the kingdom of glory, where we shall sing, " Unto him that loved, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Part Second.

IMPROVEMENT AND APPLICATION OF THE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURE OF THE CHURCH OF SARDIS;

OR,

A DISCOURSE ON FORMALITY IN RELIGION.

REVELATION iii. 1—3.

And unto the angel of the church in Sardis, write ; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars ; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die : for I have not found thy works perfect before God.—If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

INTRODUCTION.

THE members of this church, though flaming in their *profession* of regard to the Lord Jesus Christ, by means of which they obtained a *name* among their brethren of being *alive to God* ; were nevertheless destitute of the *spirit* of vital godliness, and were therefore no better accounted of by the Lord, than as *dead* branches, though *in Him* the Living Vine by profession. However such characters, may be accounted of by others, yea, however they may esteem themselves ; they are an offence to the Lord, who requiring *purity of heart*, and *spirituality of worship*, calls them “ a people of no understanding,” who draw near unto him with their *mouth*, and honour him with their *lips*, but have removed their *heart* from him (See John xv. 6. and Isai. xxvii. 11.—xxix. 13.) From such characters he threatens to withdraw the gracious influences of his Spirit, and suddenly cut them off, with judgments as unexpected as that of the coming of a *thief* in
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the season of security and repose. As, nothing less than *spirituality* of affection, and purity of heart, can screen us from the wrath of the Most High ; let us earnestly pray, that God would grant us the healthful Spirit of his grace, that we may worship him in the *beauty of holiness*.

In illustrating this subject, I shall,

I. Show *wherein* this evil of Formality consisteth.

II. Expose the *folly* thereof.

III. Make some practical Inferences.

I. Let us consider *wherein* this evil nature of Formality consisteth. In general terms, a formalist is defined to be 'one who places too much dependance on the outward *ceremonies* of religion, or who is more tenacious of the *form* of religion than of the *power* thereof.' (BUCK'S *Theo. Dic.*) Formality *differs* from Hypocrisy, in as much as the Formalist may be influenced by a measure of *sincerity* in his attendance on religious ordinances, and in his zeal for external performances ; while the Hypocrite only makes a *profession* of religion, in order, by so doing, to promote his wordly designs. But, at the same time, both the Formal and the Hypocritical *agree*, in that neither of them have 'put off the *old* man, but only put on the *new* upon it ;' and formality very nearly approaches to what is called *legal* Hypocrisy, or a relinquishing of vicious practices, in order thereby to merit heaven, while at the same time he has no real love to God. (*Ibid.*) The Hypocritical, try to impose upon and deceive *others*, by means of external performances ; while the Formal and Legal, by the same means, have imposed upon and deceived *themselves* ; and both the one and the other are spiritually *dead*, although it may be, they pass before men for *living* members of the mystical body of Christ. May the God of our salvation, deliver us from "having a *form* of godliness, but denying the *power* thereof." And to lead you to seek this salvation, I shall turn your attention to the odious picture of Formality, as it consists in a punctilious attendance, to all the formalities of religious worship ; without the heart *feeling real Desire after God,—enjoying Communion with God,—or Glowing with gratitude to God.*

The Formalist abstains from all licentiousness of conversation,

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from

from each act of uncleanness, and from profaning the day of the Lord, by doing unnecessary work thereon, or taking jaunts of pleasure on this day. He moreover, abstains from revellings, from gluttony, and drunkenness ; as also from fits of wrath, and a contentious spirit. He also, does good to others ; as in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, instructing the ignorant, and reproving the vicious, calling them to repentance for their sins, and to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In addition to this, he uses all the means of grace, and that at all opportunities ; and when in the house of prayer, he is not light in his conduct, does not gaze about him, but acts with decency, as being in the presence of God. His dress is not gaudy, nor his furniture expensive, nor does he labour for himself alone ; but the poor of the flock and the cause of religion, share with him in the fruit of his industry. His children and servants are uniformly called together, to hear the Word of God read, and join him in the morning and evening sacrifice, he offers up upon his family altar, at the side of which he causes them to bow with becoming decorum. And while he is thus attentive to public and social worship, he does not live in the neglect of *closet* duty, but regularly retires from the world, and bows himself before the Lord in secret. (See WESLEY'S Sermons. The Almost Christian, Ser. 2. As also his Sermon, on Building on the Sand, Ser. 35.) But, fair as the appearance he makes in the flesh is, his religious performances, and acts of worship, are exceedingly *defective* in the aforementioned particulars ; which I shall now proceed to consider somewhat at large.

1. He is defective in *Spirituality of Affection*, or the desire of the soul going out after God. "If ye be risen with Christ, (saith the apostle,) *seek* those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." And St Peter exhorts believers, to the exercise of spiritual affections in the means of grace, saying, "As new born babes, (newly or lately born into the spiritual kingdom of Christ) desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby ; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." After the enjoyment of an increase of *light, love, and power* ; the pious soul *hungers* and *thirsts*. Concerning the
house,

house of God to which he is about to go up, he says ; in earnest desire after the manifestation of the divine mercy, and in humble dependence on the goodness of God,

“ I'll go, it is an house of prayer,
Perhaps, my Lord, may meet me there.”

In all the approaches to a throne of grace, that the spiritual worshipper makes through Jesus Christ, the language of his soul is, “ Oh that I knew where I might find him ! that I might come even to his seat ! ” And again he prays, saying, “ Lord, lift thou up the *light* of thy countenance upon me.” And should he feel his soul dead and barren in religious ordinances ; he is *grieved* to find it thus with him, calls to *remembrance* the past loving kindness of God, *encourages* himself to trust in his word, *pleads* his faithfulness and his abundant mercy to the thousands of his Israel, and prays, saying, “ *Bless me*, even me also, my Father.” The spiritual worshipper moreover, *laments*, before God, on account of the small proficiency he has made in the ways of religion : and longing for his salvation, and *rejoicing* in hopes of more abundant communications of his grace ; he says, with David, “ As for me, I shall *behold* thy face in righteousness : I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.” Thus the gracious soul, *goes out* in its desires, after God, and only values the means of grace as they are instrumental in bringing him *near* to the God of his salvation. But the desires and the designs, the hopes and the expectations of the Formalist, go no further and mount no higher, than *attending* to the means and *performing* the appointed duties of religion. His worship is but *lip-service*, the heart is not engaged ; and his sacrifice is only a *vain* oblation, unacceptable in the sight of the Lord. The many prayers he offers up, the sublime strains of his thanksgivings, and the vehemence of his address ; is all in vain, when the heart is not engaged. May we ever remember, that “ God is a Spirit and (that) they who worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth,” as they hope to be accepted of him. And as we cannot thus worship him without his special aid, may the God of all

grace

grace look upon us, and heal our infirmities, by affording us the assistance of his Spirit to make "intercession *for* us, (and *in* us,) with groanings which cannot be uttered."

2. The *second* respect in which the Formal are sadly deficient, relates to the enjoyment of *Communion with God* in religious exercises. Such characters view acts of devotion, more in the light of something that is to be *done* by them, than as means of spiritual improvement and divine consolation: but the pious worshipper of the Lord, holds communion with the God of all grace, in the ordinances of his appointment. Concerning spiritual or divine *Communion*, Buck says, it 'is that delightful fellowship and *intercourse* which a believer enjoys with God. It is founded upon union with him, and consists in a communication of divine graces *from* him, and a return of devout affections to him. The believer holds communion with God in his *works*, in his *Word*, and in his *ordinances*.' Our attention must be confined to the communion the believer holds with God in the ordinances of religion. Concerning this communion, I beg leave to observe, that it relates not only to the *comforts* of the Holy Ghost; but includes in it, every gracious intercourse between heaven and the believing soul. Desirable as it is to enjoy the abounding consolations of the Spirit, causing our hearts to bless the name of the Lord, and our tongues to sing of his praises; it is, however, no less for our advantage to be *humbled* from time to time before Him, and to be caused to abhor ourselves as in dust and ashes. Let it ever be remembered, that it is *intercourse* with Heaven, that is so useful to the soul, while the particular manner in which that intercourse affects us, depends upon our spiritual state, and the good pleasure of the Lord. The following instances will serve in general for examples of the *nature* of this communion between God and the gracious soul. It sometimes consists, in a clearer insight afforded us into the mysteries of the gospel, fixing the *attention* of the soul to divine truth, with something of that holy earnestness of comprehending his unsearchable love, which engages the minds of angels, who *desire to look into* these things; or, in the *drawings* of the Holy Spirit, causing the gracious soul to go out after the Lord

Lord, with that intense eagerness of experiencing larger communications of his grace, which the Scriptures speak of under the figure of *hungering and thirsting after righteousness* ; or, in a display of the glorious *majesty* of the Lord, as a God of power and holiness, leading the believing soul to the deepest *self-abasement*, and sanctifying contrition ; (should we, through unwatchfulness and temptation, have departed from God in any respect, either in heart or in life, there can be no doubt of the propriety of our feeling shame and confusion of soul before Him ; and if we are called to be thankful, that the Lord has kept us by his mighty power, so that we love Him, and delight in His ways, as do the holy angels, we like them should worship at his feet with profound reverence and holy awe ;) or, by a glorious manifestation of the *mercy* and *love* of God in Christ Jesus, filling the enraptured soul with holy amazement, leading us to entire *self-dedication*, giving us to feel fresh *delight* in the ways of the Lord, and bestowing additional *power*, whereby we are enabled to perfect righteousness in his fear. Concerning the enjoyment of this communion with God, I would say in the words of the Psalmist, “ Happy is that people who are in such a case ; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.” But on the other hand, the *formal*, or outward-court worshippers, receive in the ordinances of religion, little or no engaging insight into the mind of God and the mystery of his grace ; but find all that is said to be an old and *dull* tale, by no means of interest sufficient to fix the attention or engage the mind, which all the time is on the rove after more pleasing subjects : they feel little or no *attraction* from the drawings of God’s Spirit, the blessed influence of the Sun of Righteousness, being obstructed by worldly cares and carnal desires, so that while hearing, or even repeating prayers, in which God is supplicated for supplies of his grace, their hearts are going out after worldly objects, and they have no real desire for the enjoyment of his salvation : they have no impressive sense of the glorious *majesty* of the Almighty, humbling their souls into the dust of self-abasement before Him ; but while light and irreverent in their worship, they swell with self-importance from the
 excellent

excellent manner, in which they conceit they have performed the same, and in the spirit of self-approbation say with the vain-glorious Pharisee, "God, I thank thee, I am not as other men;" or, with the haughtiness of the Elder Brother, reprov'd in the Parable, "These many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandments:" they have no transporting view of the *love of God* in the Redeemer, no sense of Covenant mercy; and of course are dead to all the feelings of amazement, gratitude, and self-dedication. Of such worship as this, the Lord says by his servant *Isaiah*, "Bring no more *vain* oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons, and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with, it is iniquity even your solemn meetings." Formalists! *hear, fear, and turn* to the Lord. With regard to *formality* we should all pray; O God, save us from being destroyed by "satan transformed into an angel of light."

3. Another disposition of mind, of which the formal are well nigh destitute, is *Gratitude* towards the God of all grace, for his unparalleled love. This pious affection of the gracious soul, might have been considered under the former article, of holding *communion* with God; but it is a grace of such considerable importance, as to demand very particular attention. Gratitude, is defined, 'that pleasant affection of the mind, which arises from a *sense* of favour received, and by which the possessor is excited to make all the returns of *love* and *service* in his power?' 'Gratitude, (says M. COGAN, in his *Treatise on the Passions*,) is the powerful *reaction* of a well-disposed mind, upon whom benevolence has connected some important good. It is mostly connected with an impressive sense of the amiable disposition of the person by whom the benefit is conferred, and it immediately produces a personal affection towards him. We shall not wonder at the peculiar strength and energy of this affection, when we consider that it is compounded of *love* placed upon the good communicated, *affection* for the donor, and *joy* at the reception. Thus it has *goodness* for its object, and the most pleasing, perhaps unexpected *exertions* of goodness, for its immediate cause.' Thus it appears, that Gratitude is a *disposition* of the mind, while 'Thankfulness refers to verbal expression

sions of gratitude.' (Buck's *Theo. Dic.*) The gracious soul has most exalted views of the *benignity* of the Deity; has felt the most earnest *longings* of soul, for the enjoyment of his salvation; has been made a happy *partaker* of most delightful, and most abundant communications of his love, which communications exceed all that his most sanguine expectations, had painted to them by his enraptured fancy; and the joy which he feels on participating in this great, this superabundant blessedness, is more than the tongue of man or angel can express; therefore justly called in the emphatical language of scripture, "*Joy unspeakable* and full of glory." After speaking thus concerning the gracious soul; respecting his *views* of God; *longings* for his salvation; *experience* of his mercy; and exceeding *joy* on account of his reception of the same; it cannot be expected that I should attempt to *describe*, the affection of the soul towards the God of all grace: suffice it to say, that *gratitude* engages all the powers of the soul to come over to its aid, while the joyful lips exclaim,

"Who, against such charms is proof,
And who that loves, can love enough?"

But it would be improper to neglect observing, that as Gratitude lives in the regenerated soul, as a *reigning* principle; so it is called in one degree or another into *action*, in every religious exercise, each of which tends to furnish *fuel* for this holy fire. On the contrary, as the formalist has no such *apprehension* of the Divine goodness, no such *desire* after his salvation, no such *experience* of his mercy, and no such *joy* through believing; so he feels little or no emotion of *gratitude* to God, but is inwardly disposed to say, "What profit is it that we have kept his ordinances, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts?" And is apt, with the Prodigal's elder Brother, (before alluded to,) when like him he witnesses God's gracious reception of the abandoned, to repine against his goodness, saying, "Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends" And more than this, like him, such characters are ever prone to murmur at the grace extended to others. Lord save

us

us from formality ; since it has a tendency to stifle every *grateful* and *generous* feeling.

4. I shall conclude this head, by turning the attention of my readers for a moment, to the subject of *religious Feelings*, which are as much *despised* by the Formal, as they are *abused* by the Enthusiastical ; but which, the pious *enjoy* in a considerable degree, to the comfort and sanctification of their souls. On this subject BUCK says, ' RELIGIOUS FEELINGS, are those sensations or *emotions* of the mind, produced by the views we have of religion. While some Enthusiasts boast of, depend on, and talk much of their feelings, there are others who are led to discard the term, and almost to abandon the idea of *religious feeling* ; but, it is evident, that however many have been misguided and deceived by their feelings, yet there is no such thing as religion *without* this. For instance, religion consists in *contrition*, *repentance*, and *devotion* : now, what is *contrition* but a *feeling* of Sorrow for sin ? what is *repentance* but a *feeling* of Hatred to it, with a relinquishing of it ? what is *devotion* but a *feeling* of Love to God and his ways ? Who can separate the idea of *feeling* from any of these acts ? The fact is this ; religious feelings, like every thing else, have been abused ; and men, to avoid the imputation of fanaticism, have run into the opposite evil of lukewarmness, and have been content with a system without *feeling* its energy.' My dear readers ! may you all "*taste* and see that the Lord is good." Having shewn *wherein* the evil of Formality consists, by contrasting it with *spirituality* of religious worship ; I shall proceed,

II. To point out the *uselessness* and *folly*, of such a temper in the service of God.

SCOTT, in his *Christian Life*, (Vol. I. Pt. i. Ch. ii.) speaks of religion under *two* views, *viz.* *first*, The religion of the Means, and *secondly*, The religion of the End. By the former of these, he designs such a regard paid to the concerns of another life, as is sufficient to lead us to pay attention to the means of religious *instruction*, which too many shamefully neglect. And by the *latter* of these, or the religion of the End, he means the implantation and exercise of those graces of the Holy Spirit, that attendance on
the

the ordinances of religion, as the appointed means of conveying instruction to the mind, and grace to the soul, are designed to communicate unto and strengthen in us ; as the *end* of their ordination or establishment. The appointed means of grace, are *reading the Scriptures, attending the public worship of Almighty God, private and social prayer, &c.* And the End or design of these, is to implant and cherish the principles of *sorrow for sin, desire after God, faith in Christ, love to holiness, zeal to promote the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom, benevolence to all men, &c.* As the means used in order to produce any given effect, are only valued for the sake of the *end* answered thereby, so, the instituted means of grace are only valuable, as they bring us to enjoy the *grace* of the means, or that *salvation* of God which they have in view as their end. This End, is in a greater or less degree answered, to the advantage of the spiritual worshippers of God, by means of every ordinance in which they wait upon him ; but the Formalists mistake the means for the end, and thus losing the *substance* in the *shadow*, they attend to the *letter* of religious worship, as appointed by Divine authority, without receiving any essential benefit thereby ; yea ! they *use* the means of grace without feeling *contrition* of soul—or, acting *faith* upon Christ—or, having their hearts *purified*—or, receiving *invigorating* supplies of grace ; and, of course, their religious worship is unprofitable and vain.

1 Formality in the worship of God is unprofitable, as it leaves the soul destitute of the feelings of *Contrition*. Contrition, is a disposition of mind, we should ever feel the workings of, in all our intercourse with the God of our salvation ; the truth of this assertion must appear unto all who will seriously examine its characteristic marks : which are, ' 1. Deep conviction of the *evil* of sin.—2. *Humiliation* under a sense thereof. Job xii. 5. 6.—3. Pungent *sorrow* for it. Zech. xii. 10.—4. Ingenuous *confession* of it. 1. John i. 9.—5. *Prayer* for deliverance from it. Ps. li, 10. Luke xviii. 13.—6. *Susceptibility* of good impressions. Ezek. xi, 19.' (BUCK.) Sometimes one, and at other times another, of these gracious sentiments, is most powerful in its influence on the mind ; but the spiritual worshipper is always, in one way or another, *contrite* before God. And such characters, shall not wait

upon God in vain ; for thus saith the Lord, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." But those worshippers of God, who are destitute of contrition of soul before Him ; will, like the self-righteous Pharisee, be *rejected* of God, before whom, " Every one that *exalteth* himself shall be abased."

2. The formal, as they do not act *Faith* upon Christ in the means of grace, wait before God to no good purpose. " Without faith it is imposible to please the Lord ; for he that cometh to God must *believe* that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him." Faith resembles the hand, by which the soul *lays hold* of the blessings of the gospel dispensation, purchased by the blood of Christ ; unto " as many as *received* Christ, to them gave he (of old ; and still he gives) power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." By faith, at first, the penitent receives the remission of his sins, and is put into possession of the Spirit of adoption, by which he cries Abba Father. And it is according to the growing strength, and activity of his faith, that Christ Jesus becomes increasingly precious to the pious soul. Justly, therefore, may faith be denominated *precious* ; and much to be commended, as an example for our imitation, was the request of the disciples of Christ, who prayed, saying " Lord *increase* our faith ;" for He hath declared, that *according* to our faith, it shall be done unto us. (See Mat. ix. 29.) Therefore, those characters who make use of the means, but do not *act* Faith on the promises of God's word, remain destitute of a sense of *acceptance*, and are strangers to the comforts of religion ; yea, do not *close* in with the offer of Christ in the gospel, not choosing Him for their salvation and portion.

3. Formality having no tendency to *Purify* the heart, must necessarily be unprofitable to the soul. " Without *holiness*, no man shall see the Lord," i. e. to his everlasting comfort : for except a man be *regenerated* of the Holy Spirit, or as Christ says, " be *born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Now believers in Christ, have attained this salvation, having holiness imparted unto them as a *principle* ; the Holy Ghost, " *purifying* their hearts by faith ;" and enjoying constant communion with

God

God by faith, they become *more and more* conformed to his will, since, "with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, (they) are changed into the same image from *glory to glory*, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Thus washed from their sins in the blood of the Lamb, and caused to shine in the Divine image, they are "made meet, (or fit) to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." But the formal being destitute of living faith, and void of the holiness which springs therefrom, will be *rejected* by the Lord, as being no better than "reprobate silver," or mere counterfeits. Alas ! how many splendid professors, will be found at the *left* hand of the Judge, on that dread day, when he shall banish all the unholy into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. O Lord ! *forgive* our sins, and *renew* our souls ; that we may be delivered from this condemnation.

4. As the formalist, derives no *invigorating* supplies of Grace by attending on the means, it is evident he goes the round of duty in vain. The means of grace are compared to *wells of salvation*, from which by faith, spiritual worshippers *draw* the *water* of life with joy and gladness. (See Isai : xii. 3.) Yea, "there is a River, the streams whereof make *glad* the city of God." And "they that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their *strength* ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run and not weary, and they shall walk and not faint". Hence though harassed with temptations, and oppressed with various ills, they joyfully *lift up their heads*, since they *drink of the brook by the way*. Believers in Christ, being *refreshed* by waiting upon him, shall "go from strength to strength, (till) every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." The language of the pious soul is, "I was *glad*, when they said unto me, Let us go up unto the house of the Lord ;" for they find, a day spent in the courts of the Lord, more advantageous unto them than thousands spent in other exercises, hence, after having been favoured with *communion* with heaven, they say, in the rapture of pious adoration, "O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee." But the *formal* attending to religious duties, rather as a Task (as has been observed above, I. § 2.) or work, they are *forced* to perform, than

as a delight, or means of spiritual *enjoyment*, they receive but little good from thus waiting upon God ; nay, often feel they are serving a *hard master*, and are at times ready to say, " what a weariness it is." Behold the poor formalist, dragging himself to attend upon a spiritual feast, where the Lord break to his people the bread of life, and *invigorates* them with the wine of the Kingdom ; but he has no appetite for such food, and therefore remains spiritually *weak, languid, and dying*, while others derive the *life* of eternity, the *comfort* of heaven, and the *vigour* of spiritual champions, from the " feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees", that the Lord hath made, for his believing people in his holy mountain. Heavenly Father ! grant unto us that *hungering, and thirsting* after righteousness, we may be blest and satisfied with thy salvation. The enjoyment of intercourse with God (says *Flavel*,) is a secret hid from the knowledge and experience of many professors of religion. 'To attend the ordinances of God in the seasons of them they know ; to pray in their families at the stated hours thereof they know but to retire from all the world into their closets, and there to *pour out* their hearts before the Lord, they know not. To feel something within them like a craving appetite, until they have *eaten* that hidden manna, that bread (of life) in secret, having their souls *refreshed* with real *communion* with the Lord there ; this is a mystery locked up from the acquaintance of many that call themselves Christians ; and yet this is made the characteristical mark of a sincere Christian by Christ himself.' (Mat. vi 6.) Alas ! how many impose upon themselves and others by fair *appearances*, while they remain destitute of the *spirit of piety*. Hence, 'men may say, there is a *true* Nathaniel ; and God may say, there is a *self-cozening* Pharisee.' O Lord, of thy great mercy, deliver us from taking up with the *form*, and resting short of the *power* of Godliness ; may we ever consider that the religion of the *means*, (as SCOTT says in his *Christian Life*,) is of no further use to us, than as it tends to *reconcile* us to God ; to *perfect* our natures ; to help us to take up our *tittle to heaven* ; and to *fit us for* the enjoyment of the pleasures of the spiritual and eternal kingdom, that Christ has prepared for those who love his commandments. O Lord, deliver thou us from

from being spiritually *dead*, while we have the *false* character of being *alive* to thee.

III. I beg leave to call the attention of my readers to the following INFERENCES, viz. The Sin of Formality—the Danger certain characters are in, of *resting satisfied* in this sad state—The Reasons why men *continue* to worship God formally, after they are convinced of their being in this state—lay down some Rules for *self-examination* on this head—point out the Means of *deliverance* from this soul-destroying evil.

1. Formality is a great *sin* before God, as those who are guilty thereof, are *false* in their profession of religion, and tend to *injure* the cause they ought to promote among mankind. That profession of love to Christ must needs be *false*, when the Heart is not surrendered to the Saviour, but a vile usurper, it may be *pride*, *covetousness*, *sensuality*, or, &c. reigns on this His throne. Those must needs *injure* the cause of religion in the world, who for want of spirituality of affection, let many opportunities of doing good pass by *unimproved*,—make religion appear as a *heartless and gloomy* thing,—and are continually in danger of taking *false* steps.

2. Certain characters, are in great danger of *resting satisfied*, in this sad state of distance from God and exposure to his wrath. Numbers of persons, knowing they *were* zealous and spiritual at one time of their Christian profession, fondly imagine all is well with them, though their graces, *now* all withered and dead, testify against them. Others, place their dependance, on being the acknowledged *members* of a Christian church, that was at one time eminent for piety; dangerously overlooking that religion is a *personal* thing, and not considering that churches too often *decline* in their piety, and become *lax* in the administration of discipline; so that after a season they retain little of their original spirit, while they tenaciously contend for the honour of being the descendants and successors of the most holy, and most zealous society that ever named the name of Christ, in hope of eternal life. Alas! alas! concerning how many individuals and communities must it be said, “Thy silver is become dross, and thy wine is mixed with water.” And so it will be, with respect

to

to every vine tree, and every vineyard, but those whom the Lord keeps by his power, and waters every moment by the influence of his grace. (See Isai. xxvii. 3.)

3. I proceed, in the words of FLAVEL, (See Appendix to *England's Duty*,) to shew *how* it comes to pass that men *continue* formal though convinced in their consciences that they are so. They do it 'because formality is so *odious* and abominable a sin, that men are loth to own and acknowledge it; how guilty soever they be of it. It is a *cheap* and easy way to give God the *external* service and worship of the body, but Heart-work is *hard* work. To sit or kneel an hour or two, is no great matter; but to search, humble, and break the heart for sin, to work up the dead and earthly affections into a spiritual and heavenly frame, this will cost many a hard tug. It is no severe task to sit before God as his people, whilst the fancy and thoughts are left at liberty to wander which way they please, as the thoughts of formal hypocrites use to do. (Ezek xxxiii. 31.) But to set a watch upon the heart, to summon *in* the thoughts to God, to retract every wandering thought with a sigh; this is difficult, and the difficulty overpowers conviction of duty. The *atheism* of the heart, quenches this conviction in man's souls. Formality is a *secret*, invisible sin, not discernable by man; the outside of religion looks fair to man's eye, and so long it is well enough, as if there were not a God that tries the heart and the reins. Thus, when a beam of light and conviction shines into the soul, a cloud of natural atheism overshadows and darkens it.—But poor self-cozening hypocrite, these things must not pass so, thy conscience, as well as the Word, tells thee that it is not the *place* of worship, but the *spirituality* of it, that God regards. (John iv. 23. 24.) That they are hypocrites in Scripture account who have God in their mouths, but he is far from their reins. (See Jer. xii. 2.) And that hypocrites will have the hottest place in hell.' (Mat. xxiv. 51.)

4. *Questions* to propound to ourselves in order to try the soundness of our hearts. 'Do I engage my *heart* to approach unto God in the course of my duties? Or do I go in the round of duties taking no heed to my heart in them? If so, compare this

this symptom hypocrisy with—Am I not swayed and moved by *self-interest* and carnal respects in the ways of religion; the accommodation of some worldly interest, or getting a name and reputation of godliness? If so, how manifestly do the same symptoms of hypocrisy appear upon thy soul, which did upon *Judas*, John xii. 6. and on *Jehu*, 2 Kings x. 16.—Have I not some secret *reserves* in my heart, notwithstanding that face and appearance of zeal which I put on? Certainly if there be any sin that I cannot part with, or any sufferings for Christ's sake which I resolve against in my heart, I am none of his disciples, my heart is not right with God, the Searcher of Hearts himself being judge. (Luke xiv. 26, 27.)—What conscience do I make of secret sins? Do I mourn for a vain heart, wandering thoughts, spiritual deadness? And do I conscientiously abstain from the practice of secret sins, when there is no danger of discovery, no fear of forfeiting my reputation by it? Is it God's eye, or man's, that awes me from the commission of sin? Certainly, if I allow myself in secret sins, I am not of the number of God's upright people, whose spirits are of a contrary temper to mine.' Ps. cxix. 113. (FLAVELS' *Searching of the Heart*, ch. xii. § 4.)

5. The means I would recommend you to use, in hopes of the Divine blessing thereon, in order to your *deliverance* from the soul-destroying sin of Formality, are *consideration*, *humility*, and *prayer*. Consider that God, who is a spiritual Being, can be pleased with nothing less than spiritual worship; that, if you were among the spiritual worshippers of God, you would enjoy the blessings of Heavenly-mindedness, Faith, Love, Joy in the Holy Ghost, &c. that you must inevitably perish, if the love of God does not *rule* in your hearts.—Be deeply *Humbled* before the Lord, that you have put Him off so frequently and so long with Lip-service, and been nothing but "empty vines," bearing fruit to yourselves, though planted in the vineyard of God, and enjoying the advantage of every external means in common with the trees of righteousness, that bear abundance of fruit, with which God is well pleased.—Be very fervent in *prayer* to the Lord, with thanksgiving; beseeching him, for his mercy's sake,

to afford you the assistance of the healthful Spirit of his grace, that you may worship him in the beauty of holiness. And gratefully acknowledge his goodness, in all the liberty you find in his ways, praising God, and saying, O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth:" for "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."

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A LECTURE ON REVELATION,

CHAP. III. 7—12.

And to the Angel of the church in Philadelphia write ; these things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David ; he that openeth, and no man shutteth ; and shutteth, and no man openeth ; I know thy works : behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it : for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie ; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly : hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out : and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God ; and I will write upon him my new name.

I SHALL proceed, as usual, to explain and improve.

- I. The *representation* here given of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- II. The *character*, circumstances, &c. of the church.
- III. The *exhortation* given to this Christian society.
- IV. The *inducements* held out to persevering saints.
- I. The emblematical *representation* of the Lord Christ, consists of three particulars, and describes him, as ‘He that is *holy*—He

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that is *true*—He that hath the *key of David*, (and as possessing this key,) He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth.' v. 7. In this three-fold respect, the Lord Jesus is pointed out as officially related to the society of Christians in the city of Philadelphia.

1. *These things saith He that is holy.* Holiness is *essential* to Christ, who is frequently stiled, 'the Holy One of Israel,' by the Old Testament writers; and in this Book, (chap. iv. 8.) the four living intelligences of heaven address him, by the title of the 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.' But, as was observed above, it is in his *official* capacity of Head of the Church, or as he stands related to his people in general, and this society in particular, that this title is given him in this Epistle. Thus we may consider him as addressing them, and saying, 'I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy *Saviour*.' Isaiah, xliii. 3. And again, his holiness, as officially related to his church, is presented to our view by St Paul, who says, 'Such an High Priest became us, (*πρεπω*, *prepoo*, To become, suit, be fitting; say, is *suitable* to our necessity, &c.) who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.' Heb. vii. 26. This holy Saviour, and undefiled High Priest, having, by the sacrifice of himself, purged or atoned for our sins, and being seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, (*see* Heb. i. 3.) has 'received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.' Psa. lxxviii. 18. These gifts are, *justification* through faith in his blood; *sanctification* by the operation of his Spirit; and an eternal inheritance in his kingdom of glory. For being washed from the guilt of our past sins, and renewed in the spirit of our minds, God can take pleasure in us, and we can take pleasure in him; yea, he dwells in us here, and we shall dwell with him hereafter. When our pardon is sealed by the Holy Spirit, we are put into possession of our *title* to heaven; and when our natures are renewed by the power of divine grace, we are made *meet* to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Such are the benefits that

flow to us, from a personal union with the Lord our God, the Holy One of Israel, our Saviour.

Thus the members of this church, and believers in all ages, through their medium, were instructed to view the Lord Christ as the source of purity; by looking to whom they were to be assimilated into his lovely likeness, according to those words, 'We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' How blessed is our state of mind, when we can say, with pleasing hope, 'As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.' Fellow Christians, hope and pray for this salvation; let us often examine ourselves, and see how our souls are making progress in holiness. Blessed with implanted grace, and maturing graces; spend your days in ascribing glory to God, and breathing benevolence to the bodies and souls of the children of men. Go on in the name of the Lord; the mighty God of Jacob go with you for good, and grant that the 'beauty of holiness' may adorn your own souls, more and more, and that it may renovate the face of the earth, through your succeeded endeavours. Methinks, it is as if I heard a heavenly herald lift up his voice, and cry to the favoured members of the British churches, saying, 'Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.'—'The wilderness, and the solitary place, shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing;—they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.'

2. The Lord Christ, is also termed, *He that is true*, or the *true One*. The word *αληθινος*, *alethinos*, and its corresponding Greek terms, signify not only *true*, as opposed to *false*,—to *pretended*,—to *typical*, &c. but it also is used to express integrity of *nature*, and righteousness of *conduct*. (See Parkhurst.) It is in the last mentioned of these senses, that we are to understand it in the text; which has respect to Christ, as the great judge of mankind, who will render to every one according to their deeds; and it particularly relates to the equitable manner in which he

will adjudge the promised, and diversified rewards of glory, to the respective candidates for his heavenly kingdom. It must be confessed, that the desire of honour is attended with very bad consequences in many instances ; but then it will be found, that it is the desire of receiving honour, one of another, and neglecting to seek the honour that cometh from God only. (*see John, v. 44.*) Desire after worldly honours, and temporal advantages, always lead men to neglect, and sometimes to invade, the rights of others ; but a relish for the honour that cometh from God only, makes us tender of our fellow creature's rights, and very desirous of promoting the advantage of all mankind, causing those in whom this principle has taken root, to resemble Him in their disposition and conduct, who ' went about doing good,—and gave his life a ransom for many.' They, who, in their journey through this life to a better, resemble a brook or rivulet, that, in its progress towards the ocean, refreshes and fertilizes the districts through which its course lies, promise fair to attain some distinguishing glory in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus. The prospect of the honours of that state, gives an enlargement to the views, a dignity to the character, and a benevolence to the heart, of those who enjoy it, that bespeaks them members of a state very different from, and vastly superior to, that earthly one unto which they formerly were allied. Grace reigns in their hearts ; their treasure is in heaven ; their conversation leads to Jesus. Blest with the joy of his salvation, the toys of earth have lost their power to charm ; and strengthened in soul by the invigorating Spirit, reproaches and sufferings, that they may be called to endure in the course of their Christian profession, are disarmed of their terrors. In the prospect of persecutions, that may perhaps terminate the period of their mortal existence, they say with one of old, Oh ! ' that I may know Him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead ;' i. e. to the enjoyment of a part in the first resurrection, (*see Rev. xx. 6.*) and a participation of the honours that shall distinguish those whom the Lord is pleased thus to favour. As it respects their more immediate interest, such characters have ' a desire to depart (this life,) and be with

Christ; which is far better 'than living here; but benevolence to mankind, and love to the church, on whose account their longer abode in the flesh appears needful, makes them contented, yea, desirous to live, for their 'furtherance and joy of faith:' thus, in a blessed respect, they feel themselves to be 'in a strait betwixt two' gracious desires; one of which has its root in interest, and the other in benevolence. To the encouragement of all who love the Lord Jesus, and are zealous to do good in his name, numerous promises are made in the Word of God, and a rich variety of figurative expressions are used, in the latter parts of these seven epistles, to point out the glorious rewards of his heavenly kingdom. But let it be well understood, that the gracious rewards of substantial and eternal glory, will bear strict relation to the moral qualifications of the persons on whom they are bestowed, and honour the *truth*, rectitude, or equitable proceedings, of the Lord of Hosts, of whom it is declared, He 'will render to every man according to their deeds.' Rom. ii. 6. It is testified again, that 'every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour;' i Cor. iii. 8. And again, That 'he which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully.' ii Cor. ix. 6. And we are informed, that when James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus, requesting him to act a partial part in their behalf, and grant them posts of most exalted honour in his kingdom, he replied, saying, 'to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give; but (to them) for whom it is prepared. Mark, x. 40.' Whatever else these passages may be supposed to signify, they certainly most explicitly inform us, that the reality of the *principle* of implanted piety, the *maturity* of gracious dispositions, and the *energies* with which vital godliness has exerted itself, will be subjects to which the Judge will have particular regard, in determining the degree of glory to be adjudged unto any one*. In order to discharge himself in this official capacity, to the honour of the Father, and the satisfaction

* Some of my readers may perhaps think, that the Parable of the Labourers, hired at different hours of the day, yet all receiving the same wages in the evening, (*see* Mat. xx. 1—16.) is opposed to what is said above

of all parties concerned, it is requisite that he be infinitely *wise*, and rigidly *impartial*. A deficiency in wisdom and knowledge, would disqualify him for sustaining the character of the Judge of the universe, and a breach of impartiality would be laying the foundation for discontent and animosity among the inhabitants of heaven. But there is no defect in Christ, with respect to either of these particulars ; for it is prophecied of Him, that ‘ He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears, (i. e. according to mere appearances, or uncertain rumours ;) but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity, &c.’

The use that we should make of this view of the Lord Jesus, is, in the *first* place, to offer up our earnest prayers, that we may so profit by the relation in which Christ stands to us, as

respecting *equitable* rewards. I would observe, that the parable appears to mean, that the rewards of glory, will be rewards of *equality* and *equity* ; for distributive justice, which is a branch of jurisprudence, concerns both the one and the other of these particulars. The Lord Christ, as he is God over all, grants to his intelligent creatures, such improveable favours, and spiritual advantages, as he sees good, in his wisdom and mercy, to bestow ; in this he acts with freedom and sovereignty, giving account to none of his matters ; and after he has bestowed what gifts he pleases, afterwards dispenses *equitable* rewards and punishments, according to the different uses that have been made of his gifts. As he is God and man, united in one new character, and as such the delegated Judge of mankind, he distributes to each person *equally*, as is severally due to them, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace. At this display of *sovereignty* and *equity*, the unbelieving Jews murmured ; being displeased, that the Gentiles should be called to share the benefit of their church state at all, and especially that being called at so late a period, the members of this branch of the church of God, should be made equal with those who belonged to the Jewish church ; which church, in the different persecutions it had undergone, might be considered as having ‘ born the burden and heat of the day.’ The parable is designed to vindicate the *sovereignty* of God, as the bestower of every improveable gift, and it defends the *equality* of Christ, as the appointed Judge of mankind, whether Jew or Gentile ; but it does not in the least militate against the *equity* of that distribution of rewards, which bears relation to the different characters and proportionable maturity of the graces of his people. (And see, *General Observations*, — Evangelical sense of the term *Worthy*.)

our compassionate Saviour and powerful Sanctifier, that we may have confidence towards him as our righteous Judge. And, *secondly*, it bids us, when we meet with oppression and calumny, patiently to suffer, and delightfully to rejoice, in confidence of his deciding in our cause as a God of *truth*.

3 The Lord is also spoken of, as *He that hath the key of David*, — *He that openeth and no man shutteth ; and shutteth and no man openeth*. By the key, power and authority are figured forth ; hence, when a city submits to the besiegers, or receives a new governor, the keys of the same are given up to the prince, as the sign of investing him with full authority to govern that city, and to admit in and shut out whomsoever he pleases. The keys made use of by the ancients were very large, formed like unto a sickle, and being often carried by being thrown across the shoulder, a key, worn in this manner, became an ensign of honour and power, and is used as a badge of a Ruler invested with supreme authority. There is an evident allusion to this badge of power, in that well-known prophecy of Isaiah, ‘ Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder ;’ i. e. the ensigna of Almighty power shall ornament his shoulders, and he shall reign. It is moreover added, that the governor, who shall wear this ensigna of power in behalf of his church, is ‘ the Wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace ; (and that,) of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, (and that he shall sit) upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice, from henceforth even for ever.’ Thus it appears, that to *have the key of David*, is to have authority over that palace, city, and kingdom, of which David’s was a type. To the Lord Jesus Christ, as the great Head of the church, ‘ all power is given in heaven and in earth.’ And as he has given his disciples a command to go, ‘ and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,’ so he will qualify them for this work, to which he has appointed them, and defend them from all the efforts of their enemies to prevent the success of their mission.

In both these respects, he says, ‘Lo ! I am with you always even unto the end of the world.’ When we take a view of the church, considered as the city of the living God, we behold the assemblage of the wise, the virtuous, and the courageous, over and among whom the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth ; it is a city that is compactly built, and strongly fortified, where peace dwells and pleasure reigns, which is designed to reign over, and communicate blessings unto, all nations under heaven. Considering themselves as citizens of this city, the Philadelphian Christians must have felt earnest desire to honour the Saviour, and do good to mankind ; but their enemies were strong and numerous, while they had but *little strength*, were unsupported by human power, and perhaps were but a poor and small society. Well, as if St John had said, it is the cause of God you are engaged to support, and the King of Zion proclaimeth himself to be, *He that openeth, and no man shutteth*; animated by this declaration, you may go forth, in the support of his cause, and none shall be able to obstruct your progress, and confine you to your present boundaries as they do the inhabitants of a besieged city ; for, *Behold*, saith the Lord, *I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it*, v. 8. therefore fear not, thou shalt be successful. Yea, what may they not effect, who are supported by the arm of Omnipotence. But, still farther to remove all discouraging fear from every pious mind, the Lord also declares, that he *shutteth and no man openeth*. In these words, there appears to be an allusion to an army that is fighting without the city walls, finding a safe retreat within its gates, that are securely shut, soon as they return to it, to defend them and exclude the foe. The people of the Lord may say, ‘God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble ; therefore will we not fear.’ Yea, this song may be sung by them of the land of Judah, ‘We have a strong city, salvation hath God appointed for walls and bulwarks.—Trust ye in the Lord forever ; for in the Lord *Jehovah* is everlasting strength.’ Again, we read, that ‘the name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.’ Yea none can force the gates of this fortress, or hurt those who take refuge therein, for the Lord hath declar-

ed concerning every one that trusteth in him, 'no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith Jehovah.' Thus, as the Lord provided for the safety of his servant Noah, receiving him into the ark, and *shut him in* safely, so that neither the descending floods, nor the sinners of the old world, could come near him to hurt him; and as the angel *shut to the door* of Lot's house, and smote the men of Sodom with blindness, so that they only wearied themselves in endeavouring to find the door of his habitation; so, in the time of trouble, the Lord shall hide his people in his pavilion; and in the secret place of his tabernacle he shall cause them to dwell in safety.' See Psalm xxvii. 5.

The thoughts of the power with which Christ is invested in behalf of the city of God, should teach us to conduct ourselves courageously and piously. Enough has been said already, to shew that zeal, courage, and humble yet confidential dependence, well becomes those who are designed to spread the knowledge of divine truth amongst the children of men, and who have the mighty God of Jacob for their refuge. May all who read these pages, be of 'the righteous (who) are bold as a lion;' may they all belong to that army, which is 'called, and chosen, and faithful.' Convinced that courage and trust becomes us as the soldiers of Jesus Christ, let us also, considering the holiness of Him who hath the key of David, look to him to save us from our sins, and reign over us in righteousness, that, being strengthened to 'do his commandments, we may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.' For as David declared, he would 'cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord,' so He that is 'the Root and the offspring of David,' will exclude from the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, all 'dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.'

II The *character*, circumstances, &c. of the members of the church of Philadelphia now demand our attention.

In general, I would observe, that he who *knew their works*,

approved of their conduct, for there is no charge brought against the angel of this church ; but he, in his official capacity, as well as the angel of the church of Smyrna, is commended of the Lord. But though we may consider these two churches as nearly of the same spirit, yet there are some traits of character that are more pre-eminent in one than in the other. While the church of Smyrna is commanded for the pious *fortitude* with which they endured the rage of persecution, the church of Philadelphia is as famous for *self-distrust*, leading to humble reliance on the support of divine grace. There are four things respecting this church, which it is necessary to remark, viz. the sense they had of their own weakness—their knowledge of and adherence to sound doctrine—the fortitude they had manifested in their Christian profession—and the character of the enemies they had to encounter.

1. The sense they had of their own weakness is intimated in the following words, *thou hast a little strength*, v. 8. Dr Cradock terms this a *Meiosis*, which is a figure of speech whereby *less* is spoken than is intended. According to this explanation, the phrase signifies, that they had or were possessed of strength, being strong in the Lord ; this was indeed the case with them, God was their strength, and they were well able to do and suffer all his righteous will ; but I do not conceive this to be the peculiar sense of the passage, which rather relates to the deep sense they had of their own weakness, without constant assistance from the Spirit of God. The identical meaning of the sentence seems to be, that they were remarkable for Christian Diffidence, and as this is what I conceive to be the characteristic feature of this church, I have considered it at large in the *second* part of this Lecture, to which I beg leave to refer my readers.

2. They *had kept the word* of Christ, had made themselves well acquainted with the peculiar truths of the gospel, and while many were carried away with abounding errors, they continued to ‘hold fast the form of sound words, which they had heard of the apostles and of others, the true ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus they partook of what was so much commended in the church of *Ephesus*, by Him who said concerning them,

‘I know how thou canst not bear them which are evil ; and thou hast tried them which say, they are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars.’ (See Church of *Ephesus*, Part First, ii §. i. §§. 3.) And while they partook of the excellencies of the church of Ephesus, they were free from their defeats, for it is moreover asserted of them,

3. *And hast not denied my name*, i. e. they continued, in spite of honour, gain, or ease, (See church of *Ephesus*, Part Second, § ii.) to lay themselves out, to spread abroad, ‘the savour of the knowledge of the Redeemer’s name in every place,’ doing all in their power to extend his kingdom and do good to mankind, earnestly desirous that their fellow creatures should rejoice with them in the great salvation of the gospel of Christ. Thus they endeavored to fulfil the commission the Lord Jesus has given to his disciples, saying, ‘Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.’ In this labour of love, the Philadelphian Christians, in common with all who, not content to keep their religion to themselves, unfurl the banner of the cross in the territories of the enemy, met with violent opposition and cruel persecution ; but, notwithstanding their weakness, fears, and dangers, they did not deny their obligations to Christ, nor shrink back from any thing that tended to promote the honour of his name. This, their pious zeal and Christian fortitude, was accepted by their gracious Master with smiles of approbation, who, by way of affording them encouragement, and in order to excite others to emulation, repeats, with a small variation of words, in ver. 10. what he had before commended them for in ver. 8. In the former of these places, the Lord commends them as having *kept his word*, and in the latter for having *kept the word of his patience*. Thus, as he rejoiceth over his people to do them good, so he delighteth to commend them, when their minds are in such a state that his applause does not endanger their humility.

4. The lovers of the Lord Jesus lament, that the generality of mankind are captivated by Satan ‘the prince of the power of the air,

the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also, we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.' That such characters should be opposed to the gospel, is not to be wondered at; but the zealous lovers of God and mankind, have another class of opposers to struggle with, even the cold and formal among the professed people of the living God. So it was with these pious characters of the city of Philadelphia, they were opposed by certain persons who *said they were Jews, and who were not so, but did lie*, ver. 9. For the opposition made by the Jews to the primitive Christians, see church of *Smyrna*, Part 1st, ii. § 2; and to what is said there, I beg leave to add, that the name Jew, is from יהודה *Jehudah*, which signifies to *praise* the Lord, (*comp.* Gen. xxix. 35. with xlix. 8.) This etymology of the word makes it a very proper one, by which to signify all those who profess to seek the *praise* or honour of God, either under the dispensation of the Law or the Gospel. But, alas! the true disciples of Christ, in every age and country, have been opposed in their labours of love by those from whom they ought to have received assistance, even from persons who *called themselves Jews*, people desirous of promoting the honour of God, *but they were not so, but lied in their profession*, or were self-deceived.—It surely becomes all who are opposing what they term enthusiasm, &c. to be certified that they are not fighting against God.

. III. The state of this church being so agreeable to the will of God, they are only *exhorted* respecting one particular, which is that of Perseverance. *Behold*, saith the Lord, *I come quickly*, your toils will soon be ended, and your most glorious hopes of happiness exceeded, *hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown*, i. e. that peculiar degree of honour which thou mayest attain to the enjoyment of, if not foolishly wanting to thyself. As I consider this exhortation to perseverance to relate, not so much to the state of grace, as to the degrees of pious conformity to the will of God, that may be attained unto by believers, I trust the following observations may be read without offence by serious people of all denominations. *Scott*, in his Com-

mentary, observes that, in these words, the Lord 'commands them to hold fast the truth they had received, and to maintain the ground they had got, that no one might, through any temptation, or terror, deprive them of the victor's crown for which they were contending, or take away that distinguished honour which this commendation conferred on them ; for this could not be preserved, without vigilance, diligence, and persevering courage.' The Scriptures of truth ever represent, the holding fast, and pressing forward of believers, to be of the greatest consequence to their eternal interest; the following passages may suffice, as specimens of their language: 'Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' ii Peter iii. 17, 18. 'Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.' Heb. ii. 1. 'But thou, O man of God, flee these things, (covetousness, vain-glory, &c.) and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness: fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life.' i Tim. vi. 11, 12. 'Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' ii Peter, i. 10, 11. It is essentially necessary, that we should attend to these exhortations; since, if we are not earnestly pressing towards the mark, we carry about with us a sad proof, that we have already suffered ourselves to be diverted from contemplating the prize of our high calling, have abated in our love to God, and the spirituality of our affections. All declensions of this kind are grievous to God's Spirit, and injurious to our own souls: as far as they prevail, they render us less lovely in the sight of the Lord; rob us of so much of that spiritual power, by which alone we are enabled to resist surrounding temptations; and deprive us of a measure of our capacity of enjoying the pleasures of the heavenly kingdom. All, who are admitted into the kingdom of glory, will be as happy as

they are capable of being ; but yet, all will not be happy in the same degree: this truth has often been set forth by means of the following figure : ‘ Suppose a quantity of golden vessels, but of different dimensions, were to be cast into the ocean, each would be as full of the water as it could contain, but the smaller ones would not be able to contain the same quantity of the fluid as the larger ones held ; so, though all the heirs of glory, considered as vessels of honour meet for the Master’s use, are plunged in the ocean of life ; as these vessels differ in capacity, some will contain a greater abundance of this living water than others, whose graces are less matured, are capable of doing.’ They, then, who do not hold fast, and grow in grace, are doing themselves essential and eternal injury, supposing that they should not so decline in their souls as to lose the principle of grace out of their souls, and thus miss of heaven altogether. To the end that we may not decline in the power of religion, but, on the contrary, be assimilated more and more into the Divine image, let us pray for daily visits from the God of our salvation, that living in the enjoyment of constant communion with the Father and the Son, through the Eternal Spirit, we may be made more and more ‘ meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.’ The more we commune with God, the more like him we grow ; and the more active we are in our benevolence and zeal, the more easy, delightful, and habitual, the practice of piety becomes. In this sense, the doing the will of God, as assisted by his Spirit, becomes a blessed means of grace too ; or in other words, of making us more and more gracious, and we know by happy experience what it is, ‘ to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.’ May we all experience the goodness of the Lord, and be ‘ kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation,’ that we may grow up unto ‘ perfect men, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.’

IV. The *inducements* held out to this church, relate, *First* to this present life, and *Secondly*, to that which is to come, and are set forth in a variety of encouraging particulars, which I shall lay before my readers as briefly as possible.

(I.) The promises relating to this life are, Success, Honour, and Protection.

1. Success, in promoting the interest of Christ's kingdom, is promised in these words, *I have set before thee an open door, to go out and wage successful war upon the powers of the prince of darkness, and no man can shut it, for thou hast a little strength.* ver. 8. In this same figurative manner, St Paul expresses his hopes of success, as a soldier of Jesus Christ, soliciting an interest in the prayers of the Colossians, 'that God would open unto him, and unto his companions, a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ.' And then he expresses the success that was granted him at Corinth in the name of the Lord, saying, 'a great door, and effectual, is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries' with whom I have to contend. Though the literary talents of the Philadelphian Christians were not brilliant, and they but a poor and an unpatronised society, who were violently opposed by the sage philosophers, the heathen magistrates, and the Jewish synagogues, who made no scruple of employing civil power, and exciting popular rage against them; yet, they should be successful, being 'always caused to triumph in Christ, and making manifest the savour of his knowledge in every place.' The cause they were engaged in promoting was the Lord's, and as such must be successful, 'for he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet;' yes, blessed be God, there shall be no end to 'the increase of His government and peace;' but 'the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.' Blessed prospect! Honourable employ! And these despised and humble Christians should be used by the Lord as instruments of promoting his glory. And, to this present day, the Lord sends by whom he will send. And God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise;—and the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty,—that no flesh should glory in his presence.' This being the case, we should ever acknowledge, that success in the gospel, is 'not by might, nor by power; but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.' But when a Christian society dwell together in *brotherly love*, (*Φιλαδελφία*, Philadelphos,) and unite their pious zeal, the Lord will not fail to grant them success, although their beginning be but small, and their adversaries be

many. This truth might be confirmed by numerous instances, but I leave my readers to make the application.

2. The Lord promises to *honour* them, in the following words: *Behold I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.* ver. 9. Thus they should experience the fulfilment of that promise, 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.' This the Lord does, sometimes by restraining the power of the adversary, and at other times convincing them of the excellencies of his people. In this promise we see, that, as a fruit of adoption, the peculiar privileges of the Old Testament church is made over to New Testament believers, through whose favour the Jews themselves should be made partakers of divine blessings, even as the Gentiles of old attained the freedom of access to God, through the medium of the Jewish church. The following passages will serve, as a specimen of the promises originally made to the Jewish, and thus made over to the Christian church: 'Thus saith the Lord, the labour of Egypt, and the merchandise of Ethiopia, and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains (i. e. in the humblest manner,) they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee; they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, surely God is in thee, and there is none else; there is no (other) God.'—'And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers; they shall bow down to thee with their faces towards the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed, (or disappointed,) that wait for me.'—'The sons, also, of them that afflicted thee, shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee, shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.' Isaiah, xlv. 14,—xlix. 23.—lx. 14. These promises the Lord no doubt made good, in various instances, in behalf of his despised followers at Philadelphia, granting them much success in his name, and such favour with the

rulers of their city, that at times the Jews themselves were glad to solicit their kind interference in their behalf, either to gain them some privileges as citizens, or perhaps to screen them from the popular fury to which they, as well as the Christians, were sometimes innocently exposed ; and which the Jews frequently inflamed, by their indiscreet and seditious conduct. Thus, to save them from sufferings, and to secure them different advantages, the Jews were glad to make application to the Christians, whom they had despised and persecuted, and so often reproached, as being able to produce no rational proof of enjoying the favour of the Lord, since they were a despised, and afflicted, and not an honourable and prosperous people. But after that the Lord had succeeded the endeavours of his pious followers, and raised them to honour and political influence, the Jews, in the straits and difficulties in which they were involved on account of their sins, began to see *themselves* forsaken and rejected, and were constrained to acknowledge that the Christians enjoyed the marks of God's favourable regard ; and, as favoured by Him, they sought to enjoy favour by their means. Thus Joseph's brethren, who before had persecuted him, came and fell down before him, intreating him, as the favourite of heaven, to be kindly affected towards them. See Gen. l. 15.—18. Time would fail me, to instance how God has favoured the Reformers, the Puritans, the Methodists, and the friends of the Bible Society ; who, though feeble and despised in their beginning, have made wonderful progress. Yea, many who enjoy learning, property, and influence, have joined their interest, from a persuasion that they have been acting according to the will of God, and enjoy signal proofs of his approbation. But, while numbers being converted to God, by beholding the success he has granted unto his people, join themselves unto them in order to promote the same good cause ; others, full of vain conceit, continue to neglect and despise ; and some, it is to be feared, are hypocritical in their profession of regard, as was the Emperor Maximin of old. (See MILNER'S Church History. A. D. 313.) All such characters are of the synagogue of Satan, do but lie in their professed regard for truth, and will shortly be trodden under the feet of Christ, as those that are

accursed whom his soul abhors. Happy and honourable are they, who are truly engaged in supporting that interest which the Lord Christ has established. O Lord ! condescend to receive us also among the number of thy chosen ones.

It surely becomes every individual, and more especially every religious community, whose enemies the Lord is pleased to humble, so as to make them to be at peace with them, and even to be desirous of their favour, to offer unfeigned thanksgivings unto the God of their salvation, and to cherish the most tender benevolence towards those whom he has humbled for their sakes. By thus acting, we shall please God, resemble the blessed Redeemer, and promote the conversion of our opposers. We have reason to bless God, for his long continued goodness to the Christian church ; and are called in this day to rejoice in hopes of many of the Jewish people seeking to be admitted within the pale thereof. (See FREY'S Narrative.) ' O may the Deliverer come out of Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob.'

3. In the last place, they have the promise of protection. *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.* ver. 10. On these words, SCOTT has the following observations, which I offer my readers, as the general sense of the passage : ' Seeing, therefore, that the Philadelphians had kept the word of Christ, in that constancy, and patience, which he had commanded and exemplified ; and which he bestowed on his people, who could not stand their ground, unless they were enabled to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him : He promised to keep them ' from the hour of temptation,' or some remarkable season of persecution, heresy, or apostacy, which was about to come on all the churches in the world, especially through the whole Roman Empire, to try and prove the sincerity and strength of their faith and love. He would, on this occasion, shelter them from the fury of the storm, and not let them be so sharply tried, or tempted as other churches were ; which might, in some respects, have more strength, but had more need of correction, and of being proved and purified. This is generally supposed to refer to *Trajan's* persecution, (A. D.

106—117.) which was more general and violent than those under Nero, (A. D. 64.—68.) or Domitian. (A. D. 81—96. and he did not persecute the Christians till towards the latter end of his reign; say 91—96.) But as this city was the last of all the seven that was taken by the Mahometans, and as there have been a succession of Christians there, in every generation to this time, so some have applied this to their preservation from that delusion, which almost extirpated Christianity in those regions.' (And see Geography of these Churches.) GYSE observes, that by the phrase, *all the world*, which was to endure the trial spoken of in the text, is signified the Roman Empire; so called, because it extended over a very considerable part of the world as then discovered. He also supposes the persecution alluded unto, to be that under Trajan, which was more general than the others. The word rendered *temptation*, signifies a trial of any kind, but generally an afflictive or alluring one. And this trial, that should come upon others with great violence, in order to try them, and by so doing, make discovery (See church of Smyrna, Part First, iii § 3.) of their hypocrisy, formality, fortitude, or &c. should be greatly mitigated in their favour. (See DODDRIDGE.) This is the *third* manner in which they should experience the benefit of God's love and favour, and he would thus defend them, because their hearts were right in his cause; and he resolved to preserve them from being cut off by persecution, that they might continue a season longer, *doing good* in their generation. Thus the Priestly, and Kingly office of Christ, mutually support each other, in behalf of his people; for, while as a Priest, he solicits the Father to preserve the useful lives of his people, saying, 'I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil;' as King he exerts his almighty power, and saves them from the destructive rage of their enemies.

It is proper we should observe, that the storm of persecution does not rage without control; the Lord says to it, as to the boisterous ocean, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.' Let the pious trust Him without distraction, since heaven and earth, men and devils, are

subject to his control; and he can save his people from, or support them under, trouble, as one or the other of these deliverances tend most to their good, and his glory. It is of the greatest importance, that we be found habitually walking in the path of piety and self-denial, or we bring down upon ourselves the scourge of those corrections, which, from time to time, are permitted to try the churches of his professing people; and, at the same time, by negligence and self-indulgence, we render ourselves unable to bear the cross, and faint in the day of trial, because our strength is small. In all the deliverances that are wrought out for us, let us see and acknowledge the good hand of our God; various secondary causes may have been employed, but had not His power exerted itself in our behalf, the floods of the ungodly would have swept away every bank we could have raised in order to screen us from their fury. For 'the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord; he is their strength in the time of trouble.'

(II.) The promises relating to the life to come, are summed up in the following highly figurative expressions: *Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.* ver. 12. The words present to us the following ideas, viz. That conquering believers shall be made monumental pillars in the temple of God—never be removed out of it any more—and be adorned with a variety of honourable inscriptions; as, the name of God, of the city of God, and Christ's new name: each of these particulars shall be severally considered, as analogical descriptions of the happiness of the heavenly state.

1. The pious shall be rewarded by being made *pillars* in the temple of God. Pillars are considered as the chief ornaments in a great building, and are of two kinds, viz. such as are designed for ornament alone; and such as, while they are ornamental, are chief supports to the building of which they make a part.

Whether we consider the pillars to signify the persons of the saints, or take them for honourable insignia to the graces of the

Redeemed, it is evidently designed that we should look upon them as constituting important parts of the celestial City. *Scott* observes, that in order 'to animate' the Philadelphian Christians, 'and all others, to the spiritual conflict, our Lord next promised to make every conqueror *a pillar in the temple of his God*; to establish him as an ornamental part of the spiritual edifice, which he, as Mediator, was building to the glory of his God and Father; that being consecrated to him, and placed in the sanctuary above, he might conduce to the beauty, proportion, and magnificence of the whole; and be forever most honourable and blessed, as *an habitation of God through the Spirit*, without any fear of being separated from him, or deprived of his favours and presence. This promise assures the pious followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, that as their conduct was ornamental unto his name, and useful unto his interest on earth, that the memorial of this shall be preserved in the heavenly world, where 'the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance,' and all his people receive a superabundant reward for their labours of love, which they have shewed towards their divine Master, and his suffering followers.' *DODDRIDGE*, in his *Exposition*, observes, that 'few texts in the New Testament are more illustrated by antiquity than this, of erecting pillars, and engraving inscriptions on the same. (For the engravings, &c. see the following article, § 3.) Great numbers of these monuments of antiquity are yet remaining, brought from the Grecian cities of Europe and Asia, and some from islands in the neighbourhood of Patmos. Some of these engraved pillars, &c. were placed near the temples of the different heathen deities, and others of them in the temples themselves, to signify their being put under the protection of these deities.* I presume, that it was in this sense of taking under his protection, disposing and ordering of all their operations, &c. that the

* In Ex. xxiv. 4. We read, that after Moses had written all the commandments and laws, which the Lord had given him in behalf of Israel His people, that he builded an altar at the foot of the hill, i. e. of Mount Sinai; and he also built *twelve* pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. These pillars intimated, that the twelve tribes lay under obligation to keep these statutes, and were interested in the benefits of the covenant, made

two pillars, *Jachin* and *Boaz*, (1 Kings, vii. 21.) which I expect were ornamented with an orb a-piece, something like the figure, &c. of our celestial and terrestrial globes, were placed at the entrance of the Temple of Jehovah, that King Solomon erected to the honour of the Lord God of heaven, and of earth; as MATTHEW HENRY observes, ‘these pillars were neither to hang gates upon, nor to support any building, but purely for ornament and significancy.’ And, by their being then placed at the entrance of the Temple, I understand they were designed to instruct all who came there to worship; that it was God who had ‘created the heaven and the earth;’ that He ‘upheld all things by the word of his power,’ and that all the idols whom the heathen worshipped, as they had not made the heavens or the earth, so they should perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. (See Jer. x. 11, 12.) Thus the two pillars, *Jachin* and *Boaz*, represented the heavens and the earth, as created and actuated by God. I understand, the promise of being made *a pillar in the temple of God*, as significant of the free justification, and complete sanctification of the person on whom this inestimable favour is conferred; for none but those, who are delivered from all the power of temporal and spiritual death, can be admitted into the temple of the living God; i. e. the Holy City, New Jerusalem. This truth was figured forth by the strict manner in which all that pertained to the dead was excluded from the Jewish temple. No dead body was suffered near that holy place, the footstool of the God of Israel; nor were any admitted there who had touched a dead body, until they were purified according to the law.* It must, however, be observed, that even under that dispensation, during which with them in Moses.—But in the New Jerusalem, each heavenly worthy shall have a separate pillar. For the pillars of the Tabernacle, See Ex. xxvi. 32, 37.—xxvii. 10, 16; and for those of the Temple, See 1 Kings, vi. 36. with vii. 3.

* While no dead body was allowed near the Temple of God under the law, it is the common custom of Christians, to inter their dead close by, or even within, their places of worship. This usage may be defended, on the ground of the difference of the dispensations. Under the law, death was the sign of the curse being inflicted; and none, while under the curse, could

the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was but imperfectly understood, that the Lord was pleased to bear the name of 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ; but this was an intimation of the blessed truth, that the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were not dead, but alive ; for 'all live unto Him.' Their bodies, indeed, were mouldering in the dust, but their spirits rest in hope ; yea, they, and all that have departed this life in the faith, rejoice in blessed anticipation of 'the redemption of their bodies ;' when, saved from all the effects of sin and death, they shall dwell in the city of the living God. Blessed hope ! well calculated to enable us, to 'rejoice evermore, to pray without ceasing, and in every thing to give thanks.'

2. The time of *activity* for the servants of Christ upon earth is short. 'Your fathers, where are they ? and the prophets, do they live forever ?' No ; the most eminent, and useful of God's ministering servants, are removed by death, from their stations in the church militant ; and that, sometimes, in the midst of their usefulness, and when their stay with his people upon earth appears unto us the most necessary. Yet, not an hair of their heads can perish, without the permission of Him whom they serve in the gospel ; He holdeth these stars in his right hand, and made them temporary pillars in his church militant ; the cause is His, and he will support it ; the resider of the Spirit is with Him ; his church shall not fail of instruction and support, nor shall the gates of hell prevail against it, since He reigns, the Immutable and Almighty, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. But, in the church triumphant, there is no mutation ; the pillars of that Temple of God, *shall go no more out* ; but its beautiful columns, and blessed inhabitants, shall remain forever and ever. 'There shall be no have access unto God ; but since Christ has suffered the curse of death in our behalf, has raised his body from the tomb, and for our sakes, appears at the right hand of the Majesty on high, invested with that human body which was dead, and is now alive, and shall live for evermore, the circumstance of being interred near the house of God, is a public avowal of our faith in the doctrines of the Atonement, of the Resurrection of the dead, and of Life-everlasting ; in all the benefits of which we thus profess our hopes of partaking.

more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.' Seeing, therefore, that we are about to receive 'a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.' Yea, let us lay out ourselves to do good to the people of God, and our fellow creatures, in hopes of spending a blessed eternity with them in the Palace of the great King. Though sumptuous temples, with their costly pillars, moulder in the dust; though Jachin and Boaz, those mystical pillars, which adorned the temple built by Solomon, were broken to pieces, and carried away to Babylon, by the Chaldees; (*See ii Kings xxv. 13.*) though the heavens and the earth, that were represented by these pillars, shall wax old like a garment, perish, and pass away, (*See ii Peter, iii. 12. with Heb. i. 11.*) yea, though every pillar in the church militant must be removed, the upper Temple is subject to no such change, and its pillars shall be removed no more forever, but be durable as the throne of the Almighty: yea,

'The age that in heaven we spend,
Forever and ever shall last.'

3. It is, moreover, promised, that these everlasting pillars, in the temple of the blessed God, shall be adorned with a variety of honourable inscriptions; for, saith the Lord, *I will write upon him the Name of my God, and the name of the City of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my New Name.* From these words, I shall make a few remarks, on—The general design of names, and the intention of monumental inscriptions,—the three-fold inscription, with which these pillars shall be adorned—and consider the degrees of honour that may be thus expressed.

(1.) In the FIRST place, a name of distinction is promised to the conquering saints; and, moreover, it is declared, that their monumental pillar shall be adorned with a variety of honourable inscriptions. As it respects names, it is pretty generally known to those who read the Holy Scriptures, that the ancients used to confer names, in respect to some circumstance, in connection with the person who was to bear the same; thus, *Isaac* signifies

laughter, or joy, and he was so called from the circumstance of his mother laughing when his birth was announced. And *Jacob* signifies a *tripper up of the heel*, or a *supplanter*, and he was so named, because at the time of his birth he took his twin-brother by the heel. (See Gen. xxi. 6.—xxv 26. and see more on the ideality of names, Church of Pergamos, Part *first*. § iv.) The general meaning of this promise is, that saints in glory shall be called by names suitable to their heavenly and glorified state. As to inscriptions upon the monumental pillars of the ancients, they were of two kinds; *first*, those that declared the family, virtues, &c. of the deceased, by means of which their memorial was transmitted to posterity, (See Potter's Ant. of Greece, Book iv § 7.) This, however honourable among men who are all travelling to the tomb, can have no place in the New Jerusalem, whose inhabitants live forever and ever. *Secondly*, different kinds of honour was conferred upon eminent characters in old times, in such a manner that they might enjoy the advantage of them while living, 'Sometimes crowns were presented and inscribed with the person's name, and the actions that had merited them,—others were honoured with leave to raise pillars, or erect statues to the gods, with inscriptions declaring their victories; which *Plutarch* supposes to have been a grant rarely yielded to the greatest commanders.' *Ibid*, Book iii. ch. 13. But while these were perishing memorials erected to the honour of dying men, the monumental columns of the New Jerusalem, are as durable as those they are designed to honour, are immortal.

(2.) *SECONDLY*, these pillars are said to be ornamented with various inscriptions of honourable import, as, *the name of God; the city of God; and the Redeemer's new name*. Each of these particulars are well worthy our attention. *First*, 'I will write upon him the name of my God.' The *name of God*, or some part of one or another of his glorious titles, is frequently to be found in the names of the Old Testament saints. I shall give an instance or two with respect to the syllables JE or EL, contractions of *Jehovah*, and *Eloheem*, (God,) as forming part of ancient significant names. Thus, Israel, or *Isra-EL*, is a prince of God,

&c. Daniel, or Dani-EL, the judgment of God, &c. ; Jeconiah, or JE-coniah, the preparation of Jehovah, &c. The bearing of such names signifies the *relation* of the person so called unto the God of glory, and the subtracting this divine part from the name, is significant of this relation being disowned, either on the part of the bearer of the title, or of God by whom it was originally conferred. Thus the Lord, Jehovah, threatening to cast off JE-coniah for his sins, significantly drops the JE in speaking of him, and calls him Coniah, (*See Jer. xxii 24.*) thus *renouncing* him altogether. And on the other hand, when the God of all grace, would express the covenant mercy he vouchsafes unto any one who lays hold upon his salvation, he signifies this favour, by giving unto such a person the privilege of adopting his name, and henceforth bearing it as an evidence of his belonging to that blessed and holy family, of which God is the Father. As instance of this adoption of the name of God, we have in the case of *Jacob*, who was called *Isra-EL* after he had wrestled with the Angel of God, and had prevailed, Gen. xxxii. 24, 28. The circumstance of having the name of God inscribed on the monumental column, that shall show forth their glory in the New Jerusalem, appears to have particular relation to the subject of armorial bearings, and is illustrated by the following quotation from *Kearly's Heraldry*. 'Arms of *adoption* are those derived from another family, to be quartered with your paternal ones ; for instance, the last of a family may by will adopt a stranger to possess his name, estate, and arms, and thereby (by this means he may,) continue the name and grandeur of his family in the world after his decease.—It is to be observed, that if the adopted stranger be of more noble blood and family than the adopter, he is not obliged by the testament to disuse his own name or arms ; but, if he be inferior, he is obliged to leave his own name, as also his proper arms : except he marshal them after the arms of the adopter.' This favour, of bearing His Name, as being adopted into his family, and entitled unto the inheritance of glory, all the saints of God shall enjoy, and all of them will esteem it their praise and honour, to be called after his name. May the time be has-

tened when all mankind, discovering the glory of God, shall long for his salvation ; and when in hopes thereof, ‘ One shall say, I am the Lord’s, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob ; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.’

Secondly, It is moreover promised, ‘ I will write upon him—the name of the *City* of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God.’ These words, says *Cradock*, inform us, that such a person is declared a citizen of the New Jerusalem ; and, as is observed by *Scott*, entitled to all its privileges forever. The wealth, grandeur, and power, of some corporations are exceeding great, and every citizen reaps the advantage of its prosperity. A citizen of any city comes to the enjoyment of this privilege either by birth or election. Citizens, moreover, were of two kinds among the Romans, viz. good or real citizens, and honorary ones ; and to constitute a good citizen, it was necessary to be an inhabitant of Rome, to be enrolled in one of the tribes, and to be capable of dignities. Persons who had been slaves to Roman masters, were sometimes presented with the freedom of the city ; in which case he received a cap in token of liberty, and had his name entered in the common roll of freemen, with the reason of his obtaining that favour. (*See PANT. Citizen ; and KENNETT’S Rom. Ant. Part Second, Book iii. ch. 1.*) The citizens of the New Jerusalem, are not so in virtue of natural descent, but are made so in virtue of a spiritual birth, they are all of them elected or chosen to the enjoyment of this community ; and are chosen to this distinguished honour, because they have accepted of Christ as offered unto them by the Gospel — I shall only add, that, whereas citizens of other states are inrolled in the council books, the citizens of the New Jerusalem have their names inscribed on monumental columns, of exquisite beauty and eternal duration. There, they shall enjoy deliverance from every thing which is painful, and have all their wants supplied in a manner abundantly, exceeding their utmost hopes, or most enlarged conceptions. May the prospect of the glory and happiness of the heavenly state, cause us also to say, ‘ One thing have I de-

sired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.'

Thirdly, The Lord Christ winds up this animating promise by saying, 'And I will write upon him My *new name*.' I understand these words spoken by the Lord Jesus, in his official capacity of Judge of his people, and the great Dispenser of the diversified rewards of that heavenly state of which he is the glorified Head. While all believers are acknowledged as citizens of the New Jerusalem, the particular dignity, and significant honourable title, they enjoy in that blessed state, will bear relation to the eminence, activity, and usefulness of their gifts and graces, while probationers below. See this figure illustrated, as far as it respects the new names conferred by Christ, on his victorious followers; Church of *Pergamos*, Part First. end of § iv But in addition to what is said there, respecting honourable ideal names, we are required, by the connexion of the text before us with the context, to consider these glorious names inscribed conspicuously on the beautiful columns which adorn the holy city. This part of the promise, I presume, requires to be illustrated by figures taken from heraldry, and armorial bearings; and, as I design a treatise on heraldry, as illustrating various passages of Holy Writ, I beg leave to refer my readers to the same.

Thus, the *first* part of this promise, respecting the name of God, is an honourable inscription, shewing into whose family they are adopted. The *second* part, which concerns the holy city, the New Jerusalem, points out the blessed state, or incorporation, of which they are free denizens. And the *third* part of the inscription, or the new name of, or given them by, the Lord Christ, shews at once the medium through which they come to enjoy this inheritance, and the particular dignity of that station, which they fill in his kingdom of eternal glory. May the Lord be gracious unto us, and bring us to his heavenly kingdom, where we shall sing, 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion, forever and ever, Amen.'

(3.) From the exhortation, ver. 11, ‘Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take *thy* crown;’ I presume, we are guarded against forfeiting, through indolence, or any want of pious valour, that *distinguishing* honour which the Lord Christ, as the holy, and the true One, (ver. 7.) will deal out in just proportion among his faithful followers. Agreeable to this idea, the writer of this book, in his 2d Epistle ver. 8, exhorts the brethren, saying, ‘Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a *full* reward.’ How full the glory of some of Christ’s followers may be, and how numerous the insignia of honour with which their monumental columns may be adorned, I cannot pretend to conjecture; but the following accounts of the honours conferred by the ancients, may help to illustrate the passage under consideration. When *triumphant columns*, were erected in honour of a hero, the joints of the stones, or the courses of these columns, were covered with as many crowns as he had made different military expeditions. (*Pant. Column.*) I do not know, whether *Siccius Dentatus*, that brave Roman, who received 261 marks of honour, had a triumphant column erected unto him or not, but these insignia, 261 in number, according to *Kennett*, Part ii. Book iv. ch. 16. were, 8 Crowns of gold—14 Civic crowns; these were given unto such as saved the life of a Roman citizen in an engagement—3 Mural crowns; a mural crown was given to him who first scaled the walls of a city in a general assault—83 golden Torques, or wreathed collars—60 golden Armillæ, or bracelets; these were given on account of some eminent service, only to such as were born Romans—18 Hasta pura, a fine wooden spear; given to those who in a skirmish had killed an enemy, engaging him hand to hand—and 75 Phaleræ, or chains of gold; they were worn round the neck, as a badge of honour, and hung down to the breast. This man was rich in insignia of honour, and, no doubt, would feel pleasing sensations from every one of them, when he took a view of them as they hung round and adorned the dome of his habitation; but who can conceive the joy, gratitude, and love, that warms the heart of the Christian hero, when he views the trophies of victory, and insignia of honour,

with which the Lord Christ has ordered his monumental column to be decorated. Hold on, struggling believer, fear not ; *thou hast a little strength* ; behold ! the Lord *comes quickly* to reward thee ; yea, ‘ let us not be weary in well doing,’ for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.—‘ Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure ; for if ye do these things, (add to your faith, virtue, or courage, &c.) ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,’ and no man shall take your crown ; i. e. none, whose opportunities and abilities bear proportion to those conferred upon you, shall eclipse you in the world of light. God of his infinite mercy grant, that all who read these pages, may be made to resemble those, ‘ Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens,’ &c. And then, O ! Redeemer, when crowned by thy grace, we will fall at thy feet with wonder and gratitude, and casting our crowns before thy throne, say, ‘ Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour, and power ; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasuse they are and were created.’ To Thee we are indebted for our success. yea, ‘ Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake.’

Part Second.

IMPROVEMENT AND APPLICATION OF THE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURE OF THE CHURCH OF PHILADELPHIA;

OR,

CHRISTIAN DIFFIDENCE.

REV. III. 8.

*Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not
denied my name.*

INTRODUCTION.

IN these words, 'thou hast a little strength,' there is an evident circumlocution, or indirect and distant mode of expression, made use of by the speaker. And it was necessary there should be this circumlocution, in order to express the nature of the grace commended in the members of the Christian Church at Philadelphia. The sages of antiquity had so little notion of self-distrust, and self-abasement being in the class of Virtues, that they had no fit words by which to express these graces of the Holy Spirit. As Mr *Wesley*, (Sermon 23. i. §. 9.) observes, 'The whole Roman language, even with all the improvements of the Augustan age, does not afford so much as a name for *humility*, (the word from whence we borrow this, as is well known, bearing in Latin a quite different meaning;) no, nor was one found in all the copious language of Greece, till it was *made* by the great apostle.' This being the case, it is no wonder that the phrase, 'thou hast a little strength,' should be used to express the humble, modest, and diffident state of the minds of this Christian society. (And See *Part First*, ii. §. 1.) Indeed, it is much to be doubted, whether in this present day of gospel light, all professed Christians have learned to consider Diffidence as

a grace they ought to cultivate. But, be that as it may, they may rest assured, that none but such characters will ever be able to acquit themselves as Christian heroes; for, paradoxical as the assertion may seem, it is only when we are weak, that we are truly strong. (*See 2 Cor. xii. 10.*)

A proper distrust of our own prudence and strength, well becomes us in our state of probation; and I am certain the following address, should not be restricted to the young in grace, or the young in years, to whom it was originally dedicated, but that it equally concerns every individual of the human species. ‘Let not, my young men; oh! let not the flattery of others, or your own self-love, (self-conceit,) tempt you to try needless experiments on the power of human resolution in repelling mischief, or in going just so far (towards the alluring objects, that vice presents,) and no further; a conceit, a chimera, by which multitudes have been cheated and undone. Avoid the first approaches to evil; fly its occasions; fly the instruments and votaries of vice; nor hearken to those that urge a compromise between her and her opponent—it is a scheme fraught with inconsistency, duplicity, and wretchedness.’ (*Fordyce’s Addresses to Young Men. Ad. 16. towards the end.*)

In treating the subject of Christian Diffidence, I design to consider,

- I. The grounds of this disposition.
- II. The advantages thereof.
- III. Make some general inferences.

I. In treating of the *grounds*, or *reasons* for Diffidence, or Self-distrust, I shall consider the subject in relation to Reason—Precept—Example—and Experience.

1. *Reason* tells us that we are Weak as creatures, Depraved sinners, and Imperfect as saints, and therefore have continual need to be jealous over ourselves, and solicitous for divine aid. When we consider ourselves as *creatures*, we are taught our dependent state, for every creature received its being from God, and is supported by God every moment of its existence, all its capacities, and all its enjoyments, are dependent on the will of its great Creator. In this respect, an angel and a worm, are on an equal

footing ; they neither of them have any thing but what they have received, and continue to know and enjoy nothing any longer than God is pleased to befriend them. To feel themselves indebted unto God for every thing, and unable to defend and comfort themselves for a single moment, is the duty of every creature. But when we consider our case as *sinner*s, with darkened understandings, perverse wills, and irregular affections, ever prone to error and transgression, we have every thing to fear from our own mistaken conceptions, and corrupt passions ; and have nothing on which we can place our hopes of safety and happiness, but the tender and abundant mercy of God, who pities the ignorant and saves the lost. If his grace does not prevent us every moment, we run into sin and plunge ourselves in misery. But suppose we are *saint*s, even those who have obtained mercy to lay hold of Christ by faith, still, self-distrust becomes us, and we ought to fear, since our enemies are subtle, numerous, and mighty, and we have but just begun to enjoy spiritual discernment, and all our graces are in a weak and infant state. Yea, and suppose we have enjoyed long communion with God, and experience much of the sanctifying influences of his Spirit, he has not thereby taught us that we can walk uprightly, and dwell safely without him, but that we need his light, grace, and peace, every moment ; we having no light, but through the shinings of that uncreased Sun, and no comfort or strength, but in virtue of the grace we receive from Him, as branches of that spiritual Vine. Thus, when we view the subject *hypothetically*, it teaches us to think little of ourselves, and live in humble dependance on the daily, hourly, and momentary, supplies of divine grace.

2. The *precepts* of God's Word bear testimony to the same truth, constantly calling upon us to look to him for supernatural aid, being distrustful of ourselves ; yea, if any one virtue is more inculcated than another, and may be called the favourite virtue of the Bible, it is the propriety of being *little in our own esteem*. Of the numerous passages that bear on this point, I beg leave to present my readers with the following, in hopes they may furnish them with matter for profitable meditation. ' The Lord taketh pleasure in his people ; he will beautify the *meek* with

salvation.' 'Blessed are the *meek* for they shall inherit the earth,' or the good Land, of which Canaan was a type. 'Be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the *humble*.' 'Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.' May the Lord put these his laws into our minds, and write them in our hearts, that he may be unto us a God, and that we may be unto him a people.

3. The Holy Scriptures abound with a variety of well authenticated biographical accounts, all of which hold out unto us some important instruction, and not a few of them are striking *Examples* of the danger the best are exposed to in the hour of temptation. *Moses*, the legislator of the Jewish people, was the meekest of men; yet, upon one occasion, being provoked by the ungrateful and rebellious conduct of the Israelitish people, he spake inadvertently with his lips: and the Lord animadverted upon his conduct, refusing to grant him admittance into the land of Canaan, 'because (says he,) ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel.' King *David* was so hearty in his attachment unto the law of the Lord, and so fully opposed to every idolatrous practice, that he is termed the man after God's own heart; yet, alas! even he fell in the hour of temptation, sadly and shamefully offending in the matter of *Uriah the Hittite*, whom he gave up to the sword of the children of Ammor, after he had taken his wife to his palace; and the Lord was so displeased with his conduct in this affair, that he said, 'Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from thine house, because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of *Uriah the Hittite* to be thy wife.' *Hezekiah*, king of Israel, was a man eminent for piety, yet after his recovery from the dangerous sickness which threatened his life, being flattered by the attention shown him by the king of Babylon's messengers, he ostentatiously shewed them his royal treasures, for which pride of heart, the prophet *Isaiah* was sent to address him in the name of the Lord, saying, 'Behold the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon, nothing shall be left, saith the Lord.' The apostle *Peter* was possessed of great natural

courage, was firmly attached to his divine Master, and, from the fulness of an affectionate heart, declared himself willing to go to prison and death with Jesus ; but, alas ! his confidence was an arm of flesh, therefore he was left without divine aid, and after a little season we find him denying that he had any knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth. In addition to these examples recorded in Scripture, Ecclesiastical history furnisheth a variety of others ; and we may have been personally acquainted with some who were men of eminence, and yet have strayed from the right path, dishonouring their profession, and piercing themselves through with many sorrows. While we *pity* such characters, we should *fear* for ourselves, and pray earnestly to God to make perfect His strength in our weakness, lest we also stumble where so many mighty have fallen.

4. I now come to *Experience*, as calculated, when duly considered, to teach you Christian Diffidence. My dear fellow Christians, have you never, in any instance, applauded virtues you have failed to practice ? or censured vices into which you have afterwards been drawn ? Search and see ; examine your hearts ; review your past conduct. Have you never on any occasion thought lightly of different persons for not bearing their trials with greater magnanimity, or for suffering themselves to be so easily drawn aside by temptation ? And have you never, while growing into self-esteem, from the comparison of yourself with such persons, been betrayed into any measure of fretfulness from the troubles you have been called to endure ; or of anger, on account of the contradiction and opposition to which you have been exposed ? Yea, have you not suffered loss through other temptations, as trifling as those which you despised ? Do not suffer these questions to pass lightly through your minds, but spend, I pray you, a little season in serious self-examination : Brethren, judge yourselves, that ye be not judged of the Lord. (See i Cor. xi. 31, 32.) Have you never, in a single instance, felt that your affections have cooled towards the subject your judgment had embraced as most excellent, and that you have declined in fervour of spirit in spite of the light that has illuminated your minds, and the love that has formerly warmed your

hearts? On close examination, methinks, I hear you confess, that you must join issue with the poet, and cry,

‘ Prone to wander, Lord I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love,
Here’s my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it from thy courts above.’

After such experience, and such a confession, I trust you are convinced of the justness of that Scripture, ‘ He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool,’ and hope you will ever pray, ‘ Save, Lord, I perish.’

II. Under the head of *Advantages* derived from Christian Diffidence, I beg leave to lay before you the following as being of the first importance. It has a tendency to arm the soul with caution—it secures the promised aid of the Almighty—and prevents the injurious swellings of pride.

1. Christian Diffidence has a blessed tendency to arm the pious soul with self-preserving caution. The evils with which we are surrounded are numerous and alluring, and the enemies that we have to encounter are powerful and vigilant; and the man, who having gained some advantage over them in past encounters, grows self-confident, and according to the nervous language of Scripture, ‘ puffeth at them,’ will soon fall by their means; as many mighty ones have done through enemies they professed to despise. A vain confidence of being out of the reach of our enemies, leads to a neglect of every means that is calculated to secure our safety, and a vigilant and enterprising foe has often made such characters pay dear for their temerity. But the Diffident watch every motion of the enemy, follow them in their retreats, and, anticipating future returns of hostility, make every necessary preparation for a vigorous defence; so, let the enemy make his attack when and where he pleases, he is still unable to take them by surprise. Fellow Christians, you must not imagine that every lust is dead, over which you have gained some decided victory, and of which you feel no present stirrings: after our divine Master had so fully vanquished the tempter in the wilderness, that we should have concluded he

would never dare to renew the attack, it is only said, 'And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a *season*;' mark, it was only for a *season* that he departed, designing to renew his attack, at the first favourable opportunity; should such a one ever present itself. Can you expect to fare better than your Master, in this respect; do you think that satan will show you more favour, than he shewed unto Him? Oh! no; he will eye you continually, and be at hand to attack you, the moment you think yourself secure; therefore, 'Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.' The command of your Captain is, 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.' While you attend unto His advice, he will be near to afford you assistance.

2. A second advantage derived from Christian Diffidence is, that it secures the promised aid of Almighty God, who, while he 'resisteth the proud, giveth grace to the humble;' and has said to his feeble followers, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' The people possessed of this spirit, knowing that they are not sufficient of themselves to think any thing good, as of themselves, but that their sufficiency is of God, look unto the Lord for strength, saying, 'Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.' And committing their souls unto God in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator, they shall prove, that none ever trusted in Him, and were confounded; yea, they shall experience the truth of that promise, 'No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn.' This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.' They, who look *unto* God for aid, shall find that He looks *upon* them for their good, and communicates to them of his infinite wisdom, and almighty power, according to their soul's necessities. The Lord, who does not require his people to perform supernatural exploits, in their own strength, will ever afford them supernatural aid, when necessary for their support, and as it is calculated to honour His name. Many instances of this

supernatural aid might be enumerated ; the following shall suffice, as specimens of the power of divine grace, to support the feeble mind in the greatest exigency of distress. St Paul, in the xith Chap. of his Epistle to the Hebrews, bears the following testimony, unto the grace of God vouchsafed to his people, ‘ Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions ; quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword ; out of weakness, were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again ; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance ; that they might obtain a better resurrection : and others had trial of cruel mockings, and scourgings ; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments, &c.’ That the pious were indebted to supernatural aid, for their astonishing constancy and joy, is what few will be ready to doubt ; but is particularly apparent, in the case of *Mr Robert Glover*, an English Martyr, who suffered at *Coventry* during the reign of bloody *Queen Mary*. *Mr Glover*, being condemned to the flames as an heretic, told one *Augustine Bernher*, a pious minister, with whom he was acquainted, that he found his heart heavy, and desolate of all spiritual consolation, and felt in himself no willingness, but rather a backwardness, and dulness of spirit, to bear the bitter cross of martyrdom. Whereupon, fearing in himself lest the Lord had utterly withdrawn his wonted favour from him, he made his moan to this *Augustine*, signifying unto him, how earnestly he had prayed day and night unto the Lord, and yet could receive no sense of comfort from him. *Augustine* desired him, patiently to wait the Lord’s pleasure, and however his present feeling was, yet, seeing his cause was just and true, he exhorted him constantly to adhere to the same, and to play the man, not doubting but the Lord, in his good time, would visit him, and satisfy his desire, with plenty of consolation. The next day, when the time of his martyrdom arrived, as he was going to the place of execution, and was come within sight of the stake, all on a sudden, he was so mightily replenished with God’s holy comfort, and with heavenly joys, that clapping his hands for joy, he cried out, say-

ing, 'Austin! he is come! he is come!' He spake these words with the joy, and alacrity, of one seeming rather to be risen from some deadly danger unto liberty and life, than as one who was just about to pass out of the world by a most painful death. Such was the change of the marvellous workings of the Lord's hand, (i. e. of the Lord's Spirit,) upon this his pious servant.' See Fox's *Book of Martyrs*. See also the supernatural support granted to *Vivia Perpetua*, Church of *Pergamos*, Part Second iii § 3.

3. A spirit of pious diffidence, is a happy means of preserving those, who are blessed with the same, from the injurious and destructive swellings of pride and vain-glory. Numbers of professors, after they have come off successful, in an encounter with covetousness, lust, or intemperance, have been met by the demon *pride*, who has made them his easy prey. Such persons, whatever they may think of themselves, are not a whit nearer God than they were, when led captive of divers lusts, and doing the drudgery of the devil; as they have only exchanged the character of the Sensualist, for that of the Pharisee; and as such may be said, to be promoted to a more honourable post, in the service of their old master, the wicked-one, who still has them under his controul. If 'the foot of pride' prevails against us, it matters not what other evils we have escaped from, we are fallen low enough, even 'into the condemnation of the devil;' as we partake of his sin, we must endure his punishment. But the diffident believer, as he is conscious that he derives not only the first principle of his gifts and graces from God, but that in every exercise of the same, 'it is God which worketh in him, both to will and to do of his good pleasure,' he feels that all boasting is excluded by the law of faith, and he has no thought of taking honour unto himself, but gives it where it is due, even to God. Thus may all who read these pages, ascribe the glory of their salvation, from first to last, to the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. 'For (saith the apostle,) by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.'

III. Under the head of practical Inferences, I beg leave to offer the following advice, tending to caution my readers against despondency on the one hand, and indolence on the other ; for as every virtue has certain vices, which counterfeit the same, so a diffident spirit seems to be in most danger, from the two I have just mentioned, and on which I shall proceed to offer a few observations.

1. St Paul exhorts the people of God to guard against *despondency*, saying, ‘ Be careful for nothing ; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God ;’ and he encourages all those who take this method, to expect the most happy result from their so doing, adding, ‘ and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ.’ Only see to it, that you are united to Christ by living faith, and then fear not to encounter the sufferings and temptations, that he permits to befall you, for He will make good his word, who hath said, ‘ There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man ; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.’ The hypocritical and unbelieving having, as *Flavel* says, ‘ no union with Christ, can have no communion with him, nor communications of grace from him ; and so that little stock of his own, being quickly spent, (I mean natural courage and resolution,) and no incomes from Christ, he must needs give up in a short time. But it is with a believer in a day of trouble, as with a garrison besieged by land, but free and open to the sea, whence fresh supplies are daily sent in to relieve it, (See ii Cor. i. 5.) ‘ As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ,’ i. e. fresh aids and daily supplies, proportionable to our expences and decays of strength, are amply afforded. So Col. i. 11. ‘ Strengthened with all might in the inner man, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long suffering, with joyfulness.’ And this is the believer’s great advantage by his union with Christ, in a day of trial.’

2. It is also necessary for believers in Christ, to watch and to strive against spiritual *Indolence*, in every form it may assume.’

The diffidence that Christianity teaches us, does not encourage any in a lazy excuse from their duty ; this says *Flavel*,) preparations for suffering, Chap. xiii.) ‘ is not to *depend* on, but rather *dishonour* Christ by so doing—you must work out your own salvation, because it is He that worketh in you both to will and to do. Phil ii. 12, 13. These are not *opposed*, but *subordinate* to one another.’ Our Divine Master has called us unto a life of pious activity, in which it is required of us that we endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Hear what he says to his disciples, ‘ If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.’ And again he ranks the *fearful*, i. e. the timid and cowardly, with the unbelieving, the abominable, &c. who shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone ; which is the second death.—None of you need be afraid, lest pious ardour in the ways of religion, should have a tendency to take you off from trusting in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Nay, but the more zealous you are for the cause of God, the more fully, and the more constantly, you will feel the communication of his grace, and habitually proving, it is his strength that is made perfect in your weakness, you will ever glorify Him as the overflowing Fountain of light and of grace. ‘ By the grace of God, (said the Apostle Paul,) I am what I am : and his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain ; but I laboured more abundantly than they all ; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.’ ‘ My beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.’

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By SAMUEL KITTLE,
Minister of the Gospel.

God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are. (Luke xviii. 11.)

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CHURCH OF LAODICEA.

Part First.

OR,

A LECTURE ON REVELATION,

CHAP. III. 14—21,

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write ; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God ; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot ; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear ; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten : be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock : if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

According to the usual plan, I shall proceed to explain and improve,

I. The *representation* here made of the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. The *character* of the church.

III. The *exhortation* to this society of professed Christians.

IV. The *inducements* held out to this church.

I. The *Representation* here made of the Lord Christ, consists of two particulars, for he addresses them, as the AMEN, i. e. the

faithful and true Witness—and also, as He who is *the Beginning of the creation of God.* ver. 14.

1. The Lord Christ is the **AMEN**, which term is the Hebrew word **אמן** *Amen* untranslated, and denotes *steadiness, stability, constancy*, something that is *true, faithful, to be depended upon*, &c; accordingly it is explained as signifying that He is *the faithful and true Witness*. Perhaps the design of introducing the Hebrew *Amen*, might be in order to point out the glorious personage here spoken of as being He who was known of old unto his people by the glorious title of ‘The God of TRUTH.’ Isai. lxxv. 16. By this means, the minds of all who read this passage, are prepared to receive what is shortly asserted concerning Christ’s existing before all things. Waving this for the present, I proceed to lay before you what is meant by his being *the faithful and true Witness*. This part of Christ’s character has especial respect to the testimony he bears to the state of the church under consideration, and it differs so essentially from the estimate they had formed of themselves, that they had need be persuaded, that it came from Him who could not be mistaken; or they would have treated the whole as a gross and malicious slander. But *the faithful and true Witness*, doth not judge after the sight of his eyes, or from general appearances; neither doth he reprove after the hearing of his ears; or from uncertain reports: ‘But, (as the prophet Isaiah predicted,) with righteousness shall he judge the poor; and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.’ Thus, as Dr. Cradock says, ‘Christ is here called *the faithful and true Witness*, because he doth so impartially discover to the Laodiceans their condition, and the danger thereof.’

As the Lord Jesus, from his perfect and unerring knowledge of the Laodicean professors, declared unto them, and to all the churches, their true state and condition, so he will shortly make a full discovery of all our characters before the assembled universe. Oh! what a disclosure of character will there be, ‘in the

day when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ, according to (the) gospel.' Who can conceive the shame that will be felt by the ungodly professor ; and the surprise and horror, that will then overwhelm the minds of the self-deceived, when they are stripped of every covering, and exhibited in their true colours. That we may not be overwhelmed with surprise and confusion in that day, let us offer up our daily prayers to God, saying, ' Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts ; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'

And as the Lord Christ has infallible knowledge of every character, as the *faithful and true Witness*, whose testimony concerning every man is *Truth* ; so also he will be *just* in recompensing all according to their moral worth. For explanation of the term True as connected with the Jurisprudence, or retributive Justice of the Lord the Judge ; See church of *Philadelphia*, Part First, i § 2.

2. The Lord Christ is also termed, *The beginning of the creation of God*. As it is by ' comparing spiritual things with spiritual,' and one Scripture phrase with another, that we are most likely to come to entertain proper conceptions of divine subjects ; I shall in the first instance, call your attention to a comparison of this sentence, with other parts of God's Word. Let it be observed, that Jesus Christ is He, who, as I have noticed above, was known of old by the title of ' the God of *Truth*,' and of whom Isaiah speaks, as being ' called, wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.' St John in his Gospel says, that He the divine *Λογος* *Logos*, or essential Word of God, was in the beginning with God, and that he was God. Having made this assertion, that the *Logos* was God, he in the next place brings forward the proof of this fact, saying, ' All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.' *Creation*, which is claimed by Jehovah in the Old Testament as being effected by his power alone, in the New Testament is attributed unto Jesus Christ ; and that with the utmost propriety, He being ' God manifest in the flesh.' Concerning the Lord Jesus, as God incarnate for our good, the

apostle Paul says, (Heb. i. 10.) ‘Thou Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands.’ These passages of Scripture, in conjunction with others, which might be brought forward, prove that *the beginning of the creation of God*, is not to be taken *passively*, as if the Lord Christ was the first formed, or first called into being of any creature, but they are to be taken in an *active* sense, and prove that he gave a being, or beginning to the creation of God, *q. d.* The *Beginner* of the creation of God. The Lord Jesus is the *efficient Cause* of the creation. See *Pool*, and Dr. S. *Cradock*. With this sense of the passage agrees Col. i. 15, 17. where the Lord Christ is stiled ‘The image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature,’ i. e. in this *active* sense the *First-origin*, or the *Author* of every created being; as a clear proof, that this is the meaning of the apostle, he immediately adds, ‘for by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.’* How great and glorious is the Lord Jesus, the Creator of all things in heaven and earth; how happy are they who have him for their support and defence, and how wretchedly are they deceived, who think to be holy or happy independent of constant supplies of light and of grace, derived from his overflowing fulness.

II. In treating of the *Character* of this church, I shall *first* consider their vain pretensions; and *secondly*, their real state as set forth by Him, who is *the faithful and true Witness*.

(I.) The high conceit they had of themselves, is contained in the following words, *thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.* ver. 17.

* Mr *Pierce* observes, that *πρωτογενής*, or *first-born*, sometimes signifies the *dam* that produces its *first birth*, and then the sense of the passage would be, He who, as it were, at the first birth, by the exertion of His creating power, brought forth all things. The *first-born* in old times was heir to his father's property, and the lord or ruler over all his brethren, and this word may be used to signify Christ's rightful authority over all things. *Macknight*.

1. They considered themselves as *rich*, i. e. as abounding in spiritual gifts and graces, greatly exceeding others in their religious endowments. As, ‘a little learning is a dangerous thing,’ tending, when rested in, to puff up the mind with vain conceit; while an extensive acquaintance with men and books, lowers our self-conceit, and builds us up in useful knowledge; so, when small attainments in religion give satisfaction to the mind, it is lifted up with spiritual pride, which none can avoid, but those who, by following on to know the Lord, have their minds enlarged, that they ‘may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth and length, the depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.’ I think it is *Bunyan*, who observes that Solomon’s Temple, (an observation which also belongs to churches with high steeples,) was three times higher in the porch than in the body thereof; so novices, or new-converts, are very apt to overrate their graces in an extravagant manner. The Lord grant unto us, that instead of dwelling with self-applauding complacency on what we possess, we may meditate with earnest desire upon the great things, which the Lord has promised to bestow upon those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. And instead of resembling those, who ‘measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise;’ may we resemble him, ‘who looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein;’ of whom it is said, ‘this man shall be blessed in his deed.’

2. They said, moreover, that they were *increased in goods*, or had long been cultivating a growing acquaintance with every subject connected with the Christian religion, so that their knowledge, gifts, and endowments, were greatly enlarged, since they first began to enquire after truth. They had studied Christianity as a science, were well acquainted with the relative importance of its different doctrines, and could detect where error branched off from the words of truth and righteousness. Yea, they were not only able to give a reason of the hope that was in them, but knew how to confute gainsayers, were expert in detecting and exposing their errors, and were become proficient in that useful

branch of learning, *Polemical Theology*, so that they feared not whom they encountered in the field of Controversy. Their *former* fault related to their conceitedness in the commencement of their religious profession, when their knowledge of divine subjects was very circumscribed and imperfect; and they are *now* blamed for being puffed up with the improvement they had made in Christianity as a science; to the neglect of its gracious influence upon their hearts, or affections. We may lay it down as a first principle, in our study of divine subjects, that the light of Revelation is designed not merely to illuminate the understanding, but also to sanctify the affections; hence our knowledge of religious subjects is valuable, as it is a means of communicating piety, and must be considered as useless, when it leaves us undevout. If this is a just view of the design of Christian knowledge, alas! for many professors in the present day, who as *Dr. Young* says, remain

‘Frozen at heart, while speculation shines.’

Yes, it is to be feared, that many in our day, know much, and love but little; all their discoveries of gospel mysteries leaving them sadly defective, in holy admiration, lively gratitude, and ardent benevolence. Oh! may such characters discover, before it is too late, to remedy the soul-destructive evil, that their knowledge only *puffs* them up with vain conceit, and that nothing less than the love of God, shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, will avail any thing towards *building* them up in the Divine likeness. May none of you, who read these pages, be weak enough to prize religious knowledge, as it enables you to shine before your associates; but, may you all, by fervent prayer, seek to have your knowledge sanctified, to the ‘casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.’

3. The third part of the empty boast of these Laodicean professors was, that they had *need of nothing*, i. e. they supposed themselves to be complete in knowledge to discern; in wisdom, to direct; in holiness, as a deep-rooted principle; in piety of

conduct ; and in strength of matured grace ; by which they were well able to resist every assault of their enemies. Thus, they were arrived at the summit of self-sufficiency and vain conceit. It was a great boast, to say they were *rich* ; a still greater, to affirm they were *increased in goods* ; but it argues the most consummate pride, to declare they were in *need of nothing*.—But they are not the only professors who have fallen into this snare of the devil ; many, besides them, have as vainly imagined, that their attainments in the Christian life were of such a nature, that no one could teach them more than they knew, or do any thing towards making them more accomplished Christians. As to the mysteries of God's Word, they are all clear to their apprehensions ! and should any subject they have not heretofore considered be introduced in the course of conversation, they penetrate into its very essence at one glance, and are immediately able to decide upon the same, with unerring precision ! Of such a one we may say, as *Ezekiel* did of Tyrus, ‘ Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty ! ’ Just thus, poor unhappy lunatics fondly imagine, that every house and estate they see, or only happen to hear of, is their own ; such persons also sometimes fancy, that they are perfect masters of every science.—Before I close this article, I would observe, that pride and insanity are nearly allied to each other, and they alone are in a fair way of being delivered both from the one and the other of these evils, who attend, by the aid of God's Spirit, unto the wholesome advice St Paul gave to the Christians, in the city of Rome ; to whom he addresses himself in the following words, ‘ I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think ; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.’

(II.) The just description of their character is contained in the following words ; As a *general* account of their state, the Lord says, I know thy works, that *thou art neither cold nor hot* ; so then, because *thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot*, I will spue thee out of my mouth. And more *particularly*, in opposition to their vain supposition of being rich, and increased

with goods, and having need of nothing, the Lord testifies that they were *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*, though they *knew it not*. ver. 15, 17.

As it respects the general charge of Lukewarmness, I would observe, that the figure is taken from the manner in which the animal body is nourished, by means of solid and liquid food, and the disagreeable sensation that takes place in the stomach of an animal, upon receiving into it a quantity of lukewarm water. The charge thus brought against them by the Lord Jesus Christ, considered as existing in mysterious contact with His body the Church, is, that their spiritual state is such, that they cannot be received by him in order to cause the growth of his spiritual body the Church. Their state, of being *neither cold nor hot*, is aptly set forth by the history of the self-righteous Pharisee, who, standing in the temple, prayed within himself, saying, ‘God, I thank thee, I am not as other men are; extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.—He talks, indeed, of thankfulness to God, but is much more hearty in self-commendation; and as he went about to establish his own righteousness, the Lord did not accept him, but suffered him to depart from his presence without any token of his regard. The publican, vile as he had been, was possessed of a broken and contrite heart, which is of great account in the sight of God; but the proud Pharisee had not one quality on which God could look with approbation, for, ‘Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.’ Pride makes their characters odious, and the Lord can see nothing commendable in them, while they are thus living hostile to His righteousness, and guilty of high treason, against the glory of his peerless Majesty. It was thus with the Laodiceans; they were of a self-righteous and pharisaical spirit, and as such, notwithstanding all their imaginary excellencies, they are the least esteemed of any of the Seven societies of professed Christians, to whom the Lord commanded St John to write in His name. It is necessary to be observed, that not a single word, throughout this whole epistle, is said, that reflects any honour upon them; so true it is, that ‘not he that commendeth himself is approved,

but whom the Lord commendeth.' As the *Second Part* of this Lecture is appropriated to Pharisaism, the characteristic feature of this church, I shall not now enlarge upon this *general* trait of character, but proceed to consider the several *particulars* which are affirmed concerning them.

1. They are said to be *Wretched*, the original word is *ταλαιπώρος* *Miserable, wretched, afflicted with grievous calamities*. It properly denotes, *being worn out and fatigued with grievous labours*, as those who toil in stone quarries, or are condemned to the mines. See PARKHURST. St Paul uses the word in the sense of *groaning* under the weight and burden of sin, from which the oppressed person had in vain endeavoured to extricate himself. 'O *wretched* man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' The meaning therefore of *wretched*, as applied to the Laodicean professors, is, that they were in a state of abject slavery to diverse deceitful lusts and wicked passions, from which they only imagined themselves to be set free.—Alas! how many are there in the same case, boasting of liberty, and promising it unto others, while they remain the wretched slaves of corruption. See ii Peter ii. 19.

2. It is affirmed, that they are *Miserable*; *ελεηνος* signifies *pitable*, or such miseries as are calculated to affect the hearts of beholders, and excite their *pity* in our behalf; and I should expect that it refers to the deplorable and diseased state of the person under consideration. Thus, the father of the lunatic entreats Christ to have mercy on, i. e. take *pity* of his son, who was sore vexed, 'for oft-times he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water;' and to make his condition still worse, he could procure no relief for him; yea, he had brought him to the disciples of Christ, and they could not cure him. Mat. xvii. 15, 16. The diseases to which the body is subject, faintly set forth those with which the soul is afflicted. Thus, a body labouring under the loathsome disease of the leprosy, is emblematical of the soul being consumed by the dreadful leprosy of sin, till it has 'no soundness in it; but is full of (or as it were, one mass of) wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.' So were these Laodiceans the prey of a variety of loathsome, and destructive spiritual dis-

eases, notwithstanding the fond conceit they entertained of their health and soundness.—And, is it not a melancholy fact, that numbers, who fancy themselves to be in a state of spiritual health, are labouring under the loathsome diseases of Pride, Passion, Covetousness, Licentiousness, and many other soul-destructive evils, which makes their case truly *piliable*. The ancients, who described the sensations of the mind, as bearing analogy to the feelings of the body, are very expressive on the affection of *pity*. The Old Testament abounds with assertions, of the bowels being troubled concerning; being pained in behalf of; and yearning over objects of distress. The same figures are used by the New Testament writers; and the Latin language makes use of a word (*Misericordia*,) which denotes *pain of heart* felt at another's woe, to describe a pitiful and compassionate mind. May the Lord in mercy look upon the numbers among his professing people, who are in a *piliable* condition; *first*, giving them to feel their sad disease, and *then*, sending them health and cure. O Lord, do thou it for thy mercy's sake.

3. The Lord declares them to be *Poor*, i. e. indigent, even destitute of the common necessities of life. As the body needs support from daily supplies of nourishing food, so the soul requires as constant supplies of invigorating grace. None but the Lord of glory hath life in himself; and none derive life from Him, but those only who are united unto him by living faith; but as the Father is in the Son, so is Christ in his believing people, to the end that they may be made perfect in one; John xvii. 23. The manner in which the principle of grace is strengthened in the souls of believers, is aptly and beautifully set forth, by the daily supply of manna, that God fed his ancient Israel with for the space of forty years, during their travels through the wilderness to the land flowing with milk and honey; of which they were heirs in virtue of the promise; See Ex. xvi. 13—35. The place Israel were tabernacled in, was indeed a barren spot, where there was nothing except famine and death before them; but they were not left to perish, for God himself spread a table before them in the wilderness, and they partook of angels' food, (See Ps. lxxviii. 25.) daily gathering of that which God rained down from heaven.

The Lord grant, that those who read may understand, that Christ is ‘the *true* Bread from heaven,’ even ‘that Bread of life,’ of which those ‘that eat, shall live forever.’ But knowledge, wisdom, and extraordinary endowments, matter not; for, ‘except we eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, we have no life in us.’ (See John, vi. 27—58.) Nothing but feeding upon Christ, in our hearts by faith, (See Communion Service of the Church of England,) can give us the enjoyment of spiritual life. And this spiritual food is not to be received by us *once* in our lives only, or merely at the returns of the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, in which we are especially instructed, that our spiritual life is to be supported by feasting upon Him, who gives his flesh to be our meat, and his blood to be our drink! but we are to ‘hunger and thirst after righteousness,’ that he may give us each day our daily portion of this living food; that having tasted that he is gracious, and as new-born babes, desiring constant supplies of the sincere milk of the Word, we may grow thereby. (i Peter ii, 2.)—But, Oh! it is to be feared, that many professors in our day, and some who are had in honour among their brethren, remain without the enjoyment of ‘fellowship with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ.’ But whatever such characters may think, of their being *rich, increased in goods*, and having *need of nothing*, the Lord, the *faithful and true Witness*, declares them to be not only in a *wretched* and *pitiable* state, but also that they are absolutely *poor*, or in a state of starvation. O! that these famished ones, who are dying for want of the *Bread of life* to nourish their souls, may come to themselves, as did the prodigal son in the parable, (Luke xv. 17.) and long to partake of the provision of their Father’s house. ‘Lord evermore give us this Bread.’ Oh! grant us the benefits which flow from justification adoption, and sanctification, even, an ‘assurance of God’s love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and perseverance therein to the end.’ (See *Westminster*, Shorter Catechism.)

4. They are moreover declared to be *Blind*. Those who are blind, in the literal sense of the word, are deprived of the power of discerning the objects with which they are surrounded, and of course can do little in order to avoid impending danger, on the

one hand, or towards availing themselves of the advantages which may be near them on the other. To be spiritually blind, is to be in deplorable ignorance of our true state, and unable to discover our real advantage. In some instances, this state of mental darkness is unavoidable, it is then excusable, and the Lord knows how to make gracious allowance ; as St Paul informed the Athenians, the God of glory had done with respect to the Gentile world, before the period of the gospel dispensation commenced, ‘ the times (says he,) of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent.’ But in too many cases, want of better information is, in some respect, the *choice* of the person labouring under this inconvenience, and then it becomes their sin, and an aggravation of all the sins they may commit in consequence thereof. This truth is plainly expressed by the Lord Jesus, in his discourse with the Pharisees, who said unto Him : ‘ Are we blind also ?’ and Jesus, in reply, said unto them, ‘ If ye were blind, (i. e. had not been favoured with means of religious instruction,) ye should have no sin, (charged to your account, for the evils ye commit against laws you had no opportunity of knowing,) but now ye say, We see ; therefore your sin remaineth.’ Their ignorance of what concerned their salvation, was not because the light of divine truth did not shine around them ; but was occasioned by the perverseness of their wills, and the irregularity of their affections. Thus the Lord complains of Israel, by the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, ‘ O foolish people, and without understanding ; which have eyes, and see not ; which have ears, and hear not.—This people hath a revolting, and a rebellious heart ; they are revolted and gone.’ As the Laodicean professors are censured for their blindness, by the great Head of the Church, it of course follows, that their wills, and affections, were faulty in this affair.—What numbers of professed Christians, in this day, are blind also to their true state, and real interest. While some imagine themselves to have gracious principles they never possessed ; others suppose they have made advancements in the divine life, to which they are strangers. The former of these injurious errors, is set forth in the parable of the Pharisee praying in the temple, and commending himself for excellencies

of principle he had not received ; and the latter of these fatal mistakes, appears in the case of self-confident Peter, who gave himself credit for degrees of christian courage and fortitude, to which he had by no means attained. ' I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think ; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.'

5. They are also said to be *Naked*, or destitute of a principle of holiness, and unadorned with the graces of the Holy Spirit, which makes believers shine in the image of Him, who is the brightness of his Father's glory. Holiness is a positive quality, and a quality of which none are possessed, until God endows them therewith, by enabling them to ' put on the Lord Jesus Christ ;' then, and not till then, it may be said of them, they have ' put on the new man, which after Christ is created in righteousness and true holiness.' As the human body comes into the world naked, or destitute of clothing ; so, in like manner, the soul of the natural man is destitute of the graces of the Spirit of God ; yea, ' the carnal mind (or man's heart, while he remains in his natural state,) is enmity against God ; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, (as the apostle argues,) they that are in the flesh cannot please God.' In our natural state, ' we are all an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags.' There is none absolutely good but one, that is God ; and none are amiable in his sight, but those who, being regenerated by grace, are ' His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.' This regenerating grace, the majority of the Laodicean professors were strangers unto ; remaining, notwithstanding their professed relation to Christ, in the same polluted state in which they were born, the fallen sons of Adam, the transgressor. The prophet Ezekiel's description of the original state of Jerusalem, chap. xvi. is a just representation of the deplorable and polluted condition of every child of man, till God pities, and grace renews the soul. ' In the day thou was born, thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water, &c.—but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loath-

ing of thy person.—And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, live; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, live.—Then washed I thee with water,—and I anointed thee with oil; I clothed thee also with broidered work,—and I covered thee with silk, &c. And thy renown went forth among the heathen, for thy beauty; for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God.' But this comeliness, in a spiritual sense, alas! the Laodicean professors had not attained unto, therefore they were but naked, and unholy in the sight of Him, who 'searcheth the reins and hearts of the children of men.—Many professors, in this day, it is to be feared, 'being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.' But, sad is the state of the 'generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.'

III. The state of this church was such, that there was not one single thing that the Lord could encourage them to *hold fast*. They were altogether wrong, radically wrong; the fabric of religion they had built was rotten to the very foundation; it was not capable of being mended; but required to be exterminated, root and branch, in order to the building of another fabric differently founded.

Such being the state of this self-deceived society, the Lord *exhorts* them to *consistency of conduct*, and to a *speedy reformation*.

1. They are exhorted to *consistency* of conduct, in the following words; *I would thou wert cold or hot*, ver. 15. Man is an inconsistent creature, often separating what God has united, and endeavouring to unite what God has declared to be incapable of union. This tendency of human nature is often noticed, and it is as frequently censured; in the Scriptures of truth; the quotation of a few passages shall suffice on this head. First, our Lord has forewarned us, saying, 'No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else, he will hold to the one, and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and mammon: and it may as justly be added, ye cannot build your hopes

both upon yourself, and also upon Christ Jesus, the Lord. How long, (said Elijah to Israel,) 'How long, halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him.' This is as if he had said, it is in vain to pretend to hold them both in esteem; he who is truly God, claims your supreme regard, and cannot admit of a rival; give him, therefore, your undivided affections, or renounce him altogether; which in fact you do, whose hearts are not for the Lord, and for him only. Again, St James declares, that 'a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways;' yea, he is so far from being built upon the sure foundation, that he resembles 'a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed.' We may consider the Lord as saying, O foolish Laodiceans! when will you learn to be consistent, and leave off playing at hold and loose of my salvation? either give up your vain confidence in an arm of flesh, or renounce Me altogether; I would ye were either *cold* or *hot*; either ardently attached to me and my communicated grace, or that you would cease making such vain pretensions to being my disciples. And because from Him alone could their help come, the Lord graciously invites them to come to him, and *buy*, i. e. without money, and without price, as *Isaiah* speaks, (chap. lv. 1.) receiving, as the gift of His love, gold tried in the fire, that they may be enriched; white-raiment, that they may be clothed and adorned; and eye-salve, that their understandings may be divinely illuminated. Those who are endowed with gracious principles, adorned with holy conduct, and enlightened with heavenly wisdom, owe all the praise, from first to last, unto the boundless mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Let all who name the name of Christ, unite to sing

' Oh! to grace, how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrain'd to be;
May that grace, just like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.'

Lord save us from inconsistently saying, 'We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by Thy name, to take away our reproach.' Such conduct is despicable in any people, and provokes the only Saviour to spue them out

of his mouth ; and should any of us be found such characters, He will cast us off also.

I beg leave to add *three* observations, on the counsel that is given to these necessitous Laodiceans, to come to Christ, and *buy* gold and raiment, &c. *First*, In order to feel a desire to make a purchase of any kind, it is necessary that we conceive the thing to be sold, not only to be valuable in itself, but also to be calculated to advantage *us*, should we be able to procure the same. *Secondly*, There must be an actual giving of the price demanded, or *we* cannot be the purchasers. And *thirdly*, When the price agreed upon is paid by us, the commodity is made over to us for *our* advantage. Thus, in order to our coming to the enjoyment of the great salvation by Jesus Christ, we must be convinced of the inestimable *value* of His righteousness ; be ready to *part*, not only with our sins, but also with all our self-righteous and legal dependencies, however much we may have admired them, or they may have been admired by others ; and come unto Christ, as poor, wretched, naked, and miserable sinners : then, when we are thus humbled at His feet, and seeing the value of his grace, are willing to part with all, so that He may become ours ; the Redeemer will *make over* unto us the blessings of his grace, and we shall be comforted, enriched, and beautified, with his Salvation.

2. They are moreover exhorted to a *speedy Reformation* of heart and of life. To this they are called in the following expressive words, *be zealous therefore and repent*, ver. 19. It is not necessary for me to enlarge upon the nature of repentance in this place, as it has been before observed, (*See Church of Ephesus, Part First. iii. § 2.*) that it is, *after thought productive of Reformation* ; for no expressions of sorrow, which are unproductive of reformation, can possibly be admitted as fruits of that repentance that needeth not to be repented of. It must however be particularly attended to, that the repentance required of them, was to consist of the total self-renunciation ; of the necessity of which I have treated in the foregoing observations, relative to consistency of conduct. This repentance, or in other words, this most glorious reformation, as it was necessary it should take

place, so it was requisite it should take place immediately, with alacrity and zeal. The Lord, who exhorted them to attend to it for their good, urged upon them the necessity of immediate compliance. This reform was of absolute necessity; their salvation was at stake, since none but living members of the mystical body of Christ have any title to the happiness of heaven.

IV. The *Inducements* held out to the members of this church, to renounce their self-righteous dependencies, and seek the righteousness of Faith, are *first*, of an alarming, and *secondly*, of an encouraging, nature.

(I.) Their fears are *alarmed*, by the following denunciation, 'So then, because thou art luke-warm, and neither cold nor hot, *I will spue thee out of My mouth.*' ver. 16. The effect of warm water on the animal stomach, is too well known to require any illustration, in order to set the figure of the text in a striking point of light. But, I would observe, that the *Easterns* connect the idea of great contempt with the action of *spitting*, not merely on, but even towards a person. See CALMETS' *Fragments*, No 76. And I remember reading of a young Arabian woman, who expressed her contempt for a rustic that wished to salute her, by spitting in his presence. *Fry*, in his *Memoirs*, says, that the Jews to this day spit, on hearing the name of Christ mentioned. This action of spitting is very expressive of the detestation in which we hold any person or thing, for as DR. A. CLARKE observes, in his *Commentary*, See John vi. 56. 'Of all connections and unions, none is so intimate and complete, as that which is effected by the digestion of aliments; because they are changed into the very *substance* of the person who eats them: and this our Lord makes the model of that union which subsists between himself and genuine believers. He lives in them, and they in Him, &c.' This intimate union, subsisting between the body and the aliments that nourish us, makes it, that to spit any thing out of our mouth is synonymous with refusing to admit its admixture with the animal system. It appears then, that by the expressive figure under consideration, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the great Head of his body the church, declares, that he loathes and abominates the false-hearted and self-righteous Laodiceans, and will by no

means take characters of their stamp into mystical union with Himself.*—How awful is the state of those self-deceivers, whom the Saviour of sinners loathes here, and will banish hereafter from his kingdom of glory. O! let the wicked forsake his way, and unrighteous man his thoughts,* for ‘God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.’ ‘The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise;’ but, ‘every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.’

(II.) They are excited to self-renunciation, and a cordial acceptance of the righteousness of faith, by a variety of animating *Promises*; such as, Comfort, Riches, Honour, Knowledge, and Dominion. And, because that, when they came to have a just sight of the corruption of their natures, and the vanity of their former profession, they would be overwhelmed with shame, astonishment, and fear, the Lord Jesus graciously assures them, that his reproofs were in mercy, being designed for their conviction and conversion, and not for their destruction; that they were fruits of his forbearing compassion, and not of his consuming indignation. Wonder and gratitude must operate powerfully on the mind of every soul under conviction, at hearing the Lord Jesus say, *as many as I love*, (or have compassion towards,) *I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent.* ver 19. Blessed be the name of the Lord; the reproofs that come from God are designed to draw us to God. And in his mercy we may find refuge from the rod of his indignation. God forbid, that we should ‘despise the chastenings of the Lord, or faint, when we are rebuked of Him.’ Let us ‘take with us words, and turn to the Lord, and say unto him, take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips;—i. e. offer praises to Thy name. Still further to encourage us to put our trust in the gracious Redeemer, he represents himself as waiting

* Perhaps this phrase, *I will spue thee out of my mouth*, may be in reference to Lev. xviii. 25. where, after an enumeration of various abominations, it is said, that on account of these things, ‘the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.’ Thus, it marks in the strongest manner the utter detestation in which the Lord holds the self-righteous.

near at hand to receive us ; yea, and importunately soliciting us, to accept of him, and of his salvation. *Behold, (says He,) I stand at the door and knock,* ver. 20.—What a mercy is it, to be under the convictions and drawings of the Holy Spirit—what a mercy, that the Lord has not sworn in his wrath, that we shall not enter into His rest. Sure, it is a wonder of grace, that he has not before now said in his wrath, ‘ Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone.’ Never, never, shall we be able sufficiently to adore that mercy, which causes the Lord to be unwilling to give us up to the deceit of our own hearts, and inclines him still to draw us with the cords of a man, with bands of love, and to spread before us the bounties of his grace. *See Hos. xi. 4—8.*

I shall now proceed to enlarge a little on the blessings, with which the Lord Christ enriches those who believe in him, with the heart unto righteousness.

1. He bestows upon them *Comfort*, even the comfort of the Holy Ghost ; which is pointed out under the following figure : *If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.* ver. 20. Happiness is the desire of all mankind, and the truest happiness is to be found in the ways of religion ; so they have but poor fare, who try to fill their bellies with the husks of carnal pleasures, or with the chaff of formal duties. ‘ Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money (no righteousness of his own, on which he can trust as a means of procuring God’s regard,) come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come buy wine and milk, without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread ? and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul *delight itself* in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me : hear, and your soul shall live ; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.’ When we are blessed through faith, with a personal interest in the covenant of grace, and the Lord Jesus grants us a sense of his reviving presence, it turns earth into heaven, and sweetens every bitter occurrence ; and when we are enabled to feed on Him, the true Bread that comes down

from heaven, we are favoured with a foretaste of the banquet above, and experience 'joy unspeakable and full of glory.'—'O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.' He that eateth the Lord Christ, shall live by Him. They who habitually live a life of faith in the Son of God, shall gratefully declare, 'Thou preparest a table before me, in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.' Blessed are they who feast on the manna of God's love; and *if any man*, whomsoever he may be, attend to the invitation of the Lord, and seek salvation in Christ alone, he shall enjoy this happiness. These words, (*if any man hear,*) afford encouragement to *all* to look unto Christ for salvation, and at the same time they seem to intimate, that few formalists, comparatively speaking, renounce their own righteousness for the sake of the righteousness of Faith.—My dear readers, may you all *experience* that the Lord is gracious.

2. The Redeemer promises to bestow upon them the *true Riches*. *I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire*. Gold is the most precious of all metals, and is greatly improved in value by being purified in the furnace from all foreign admixtures. The gold with which the Lord Christ enriches his people, in the *principle* of gospel faith, which is far more precious than the purest gold. Many professors of religion seek to work out a righteousness of their own; but they hope in vain by this means to become rich in moral worth; we must come to Christ in order to obtain this most valuable of all blessings, the principle of holiness. While all those who are not enriched by the grace of the Saviour, are quite inadequate to meet the demands brought against them by the law of God, justice is perfectly satisfied with all who are in Christ by faith. And while those who are in a state of nature, fail in a variety of particulars, to satisfy the daily requisitions of God's holy law, 'the righteousness thereof is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.' True it is, that 'they that are in the flesh cannot please God; but ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the

Spirit of Christ dwell in you.' It must be allowed on all hands, that they against whom the law has no charges, to bring on account of the past, and who are fully able to meet all its demands for the future, are rich indeed, in a principle of goodness. O what debtors are believers to grace! All who are thus enriched will join the apostle in saying, 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.' It is from the bank of heaven that Christians draw their supplies; for the treasures of grace as well as of glory, are at the disposal of the Lord Jesus. All who believe in Him have that promise to rely upon, 'As are thy days, so shall be thy strength;' encouraged by this assurance, we will go on our way rejoicing, and sing,

His Word is sufficient

The Lord will provide.

The precious faith that makes believers one with Christ, has, in numberless instances, endured the fire, the hottest fire of persecution, not only without being consumed, but it has also been rendered more resplendent by the flames. This is gold that will enrich them in the day of adversity, the hour of death, and to the ages of eternity. That we are right in considering this pure gold, tried in the fire, to signify gospel faith enduring the fiery trial of persecution, is evident from that famous passage of St Peter, who addressing the Christians on the subject of the persecutions they were called to endure, concludes, by observing, they are permitted, 'that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.'

3. The Lord also promises, to *beautify* them with his salvation; saying, to all who lay hold upon Him by faith, I will give thee *White raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.* For *white garments*, as conveying the ideas of Freedom, Joy, and Honour, See Church of *Sardis*, Part First. iv §. ii §§ i. The promise in this place relates to the holy conduct of believers, whose righteous walk and conversation, points them out as being made *free* by the Son of God. (John viii.

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36.) Having their hearts *comforted* with this mark of their sonship ; (i John iv. 17.) and *shining* bright in the glory of God. (Isaiah lx. 1.) Thus, while the former promise of bestowing the true riches upon those who believe in Christ refers to a holy *principle*, this promise of arraying them in white, has respect to a virtuous and amiable *deportment*. What a person really possesses, whither we allude to worldly wealth, or to the principle of grace, is in a great degree uncertain to others ; but the manner in which we are decorated, and the course of conduct in which we walk, are things which are quite conspicuous, every person who surrounds us, being capable of observing our dress, and judging of our behaviour. The Lord Jesus will enable his true disciples to walk in purity of conduct before men, so that there shall be nothing indecorous in their deportment ; but the whole of their behaviour shall be according to the purity of the gospel. Believers shall be enabled to walk with Christ, ‘in newness of life,’ because they live in Him, the ‘life of faith.’ Oh, how amiable is moral worth ! how comely is the beauty of holiness ! and those whose hearts are right with the Saviour shall be arrayed in this splendend attire.

4. The Lord will graciously *anoint* their *eyes with eye-salve*, that they may see.—They who attend to the teachings of the Spirit shall be made *wise* unto salvation ; for, as Elihu observes in the book of Job, concerning the children of men, ‘the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.’ This is the true *collyrium*, or eye-salve, that maketh clear the spiritual senses. ‘The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul ; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart : the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.’ The Lord Jesus is the light of the world, and those who follow him as his disciples, to learn of him and copy after his example, ‘shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.’ The eyes of the understandings of such characters being enlightened, they shall know ‘what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints ; and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according

to the working of his mighty power.' O how blessed ! to be *taught of God* ; and praised be the Lord, his secret is with those who fear him. Such characters as these shall know the great things of God, and if they do but follow on to know the Lord, they shall happily prove, that ' His going forth is prepared as the morning,' and the path of these just ones shall be as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Happy characters ! on whom the Sun of Righteousness is risen with healing in his wings ; such persons shall enjoy the salvation which St Paul prayed for, in behalf of the Colossian and Laodicean Christians, even having their hearts ' comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.' Brethren, rejoice in the Lord Jesus as in your great Teacher, and may ' the anointing, which you have received of Him, abide in you ; and (then) ye need not that any man teach you ; but as the same anointing teacheth all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him.' The learning which we gain from men and books, can do no more than puff up the mind with vain conceit ; it is the knowledge that is communicated by the Holy Spirit, and that alone, which can make us wise to good purpose, even to present and eternal salvation. Being destitute of this holy unction, the sages of antiquity, with all their boasted learning, laboured under the curse of darkened understandings, and of depraved affections ; yea, for want of this sacred eye-salve, many professors, well versed in polemic divinity, cannot discern their title to God's favour, or discover how to promote the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom ; but those who are anointed with this holy unction, however little they may know of other things, are blessed with a clear discovery of the favourable regard of the Almighty, are wise to discover the best methods of shewing forth the praises of the Lord, and are of quick understanding to devise methods of public utility.

5. Power and *dominion* shall moreover be the everlasting portion of those who live the life of faith. Hear what the glorified Redeemer says, concerning *all* those who conquer through Him.

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. Because the Lord Jesus, in his mediatorial capacity, fulfilled all righteousness and became obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross, 'God also hath highly exalted him, (as the Head of his people,) and given him a name which is above every name,' that all should bow unto Him, 'and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' As the Lord Christ conquered in behalf of his people, and has taken possession of the kingdom as the forerunner and glorified Head of believers, so He being seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, grants unto his followers a participation of his glory, that they may eat and drink at his table, in his kingdom, and sit on thrones of princely dignity; thus being promoted to the most honourable stations, in that kingdom of eternal glory. In this world, the true disciples of the Lord are in general a despised and afflicted people; but in the heavenly state to which they are hastening, dominion, majesty, and power, shall be bestowed upon them by the glorified Redeemer, who has made them 'kings and priests unto God and his Father.' But *See* more on the honours of Christ's kingdom, in the Lecture on the *Glorified State of the Church*. In the mean time rest assured, that it is a faithful saying, 'If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him.' These victors, (as *Scott* observes,) being first conformed to Christ, in conflict, self-denial, and suffering, shall at last be conformed to him in victory, and exaltation. And when Christ dwells in our hearts by his Holy Spirit, we may hope by His help to conquer every enemy, till our blessed experience explains to us, what otherwise we cannot understand, even, what it is to be seated with the Lord upon His throne!

I would sum up the whole by observing, that whereas Christ finds us wretched, poor, naked, blind, and friendless, He makes us, by grace and adoption, happy, rich, honourable, wise unto salvation; and,—let earth and heaven be filled with amazement,—He admits his people to a participation of his throne of eternal glory!

CHURCH OF LAODICEA.

Part Second.

IMPROVEMENT AND APPLICATION OF THE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURE OF THE CHURCH OF LAODICEA ;

OR,

A DISCOURSE ON A PHARISAICAL SPIRIT.

Rev. 3. 16. *Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*

INTRODUCTION.

It has been observed in the foregoing Lecture, that there was not a single quality in this society of professed Christians, on account of which the Lord could speak in their commendation. Their discovery of His excellencies, was but confused and imperfect ; their attachment to him was not sincere, and their affections towards him were languid ; and as such, unacceptable and false ; 'True love, (as is observed by *Wilberforce*, on Christianity,) is an ardent, and an active principle—a cold, a dormant, a phlegmatic gratitude, are contradictions in terms.' But a cold, lifeless, lukewarm state of mind, was characteristic of these Laodicean professors.

I exhort my readers to serious attention, and earnest prayer, while I lay before them,

I. The nature of the evil reproved.

II. Its dreadful consequences.

III. Make some practical *Inferences*.

I. I shall shew the nature of a Pharisaical spirit.

The disease is *gracelessness* aggravated by stupid insensibility and vain conceit. The Pharisees of old were not blamed so much for hypocrisy, as for spiritual pride : they are said, to have

‘trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and (to have) despised others.’ On this ground the *Elder Brother* was angry at the kind reception the returning Prodigal met with from his father, and refused to mix with them in their festive joy, Luke 15. 28, 30. From this ill founded opinion of himself, the *Pharisee* in the temple, pretended to thank God, that he was not corrupt like other men, enumerated his own virtues instead of magnifying divine mercy, and despised the heart-broken Publican whom God graciously accepted, See Luke xviii. 9, 14. And from this mistaken estimate of his own state, *Saul*, the Pharisee, was ‘alive without the law,’ i. e. full of vain confidence towards God, on account of the supposed merits of his imaginary righteousness, until God afforded him such an insight into the spirituality of his law, that Paul felt himself to be ‘carnal and sold under sin,’ and had no hopes of salvation but through the righteousness of faith. Persons who thus impose upon themselves, are not so properly stiled Hypocrites as Self-deceivers; yet self-deceit in this case is sometimes called *formal* hypocrisy: the meaning of which censure is cleared up, by the following quotation from *Flavel’s Touchstone of Sincerity*. ‘To pretend to the good which we are convinced that we have not, is *gross* hypocrisy; to persuade ourselves that we enjoy those good principles which we by no means possess, but only imagine ourselves to partake of, is *formal* hypocrisy.’ These formal-hypocrites, or self-deceivers, who, alas! make the bulk of the professing world, have no just sense of the corrupt state of the natural mind, but as *Wilberforce* observes, they ‘are used to speak of man as of a being, who, naturally pure and inclined to all virtue, is sometimes, almost involuntarily, drawn out of the right course, or is overpowered by the violence of temptation. Vice with them is rather an accidental and temporary, than a constitutional and habitual distemper; a noxious plant, which, though found to live, and even to thrive in the human mind, is not the natural growth and production of the soul.’ The self-righteousness of some persons is very gross, and others hold the same principles in a more refined manner; both of these characters demand a moment’s consideration.

1. *Mr Wesley*, in his Sermon on the Deceitfulness of Man's Heart, has the following observations, on a self-righteous principle. 'How many laboured panegyrics do we now read and hear on the dignity of human nature? One eminent preacher, in a sermon of his, preached and printed a few years ago, does not scruple to affirm, First, that men in general are very *wise*; Secondly, that they are very *virtuous*; and Thirdly, that they are very *happy*! Nearly related to these sentiments, are those of an ingenious gentleman, who being asked, 'My Lord, what do you think of the Bible?' answered, 'I think it is the finest book I ever read in my life. Only that part of it which indicates the Mediatorial Scheme, I do not understand. For I do not conceive there is any need of a Mediator between God and man. If, indeed, (continued he,) I was a sinner, then I should need a Mediator. But I do not conceive that I am. It is true, I often act wrong for want of more understanding; and I frequently feel wrong tempers, particularly proneness to anger. But I cannot allow this to be a sin; for it depends on the motion of my blood and spirits, which I cannot help. Therefore it cannot be a sin. Or if it be, the blame must fall not on *me*, but on Him that made me.' The very sentiments, (adds Mr W.) of *pious* Lord Kaimes, and *modest* Mr Hume.' O what numbers of persons in the professing world, rest their eternal hopes on a vague, general persuasion of the unqualified mercy of the Supreme Being, or who still more erroneously, rely in the main, on their own negative or positive virtues. 'They can look upon their lives with an impartial eye, and congratulate themselves on their inoffensiveness in society; on their having been exempt, at least, from any gross vice; or, if sometimes accidentally betrayed into it, on its never having been indulged habitually; or, if even so, (for there are but few who can say this, if the term vice be explained according to the requisitions of the gospel,) yet, on the balance being in their favour, or on the whole not much against them, when their good and bad actions are fairly weighed, and due allowance is made for human frailty.' (Wilberforce.) These considerations are sufficient for the most part to compose their apprehensions; these are the cordials which they find most at

hand, in the moments of serious thought, or of occasional dejection. But this is 'going about to establish their own righteousness,' in direct opposition to the righteousness of faith, the only righteousness which is of God.

2. Many legal people, however are to be found within the pale of the church, who do not mean to disclaim a Saviour, or avowedly to relinquish their share in the benefits of His death. They close their petitions with the name of Christ; but this, it is to be feared, is chiefly from the effect of habit, or out of decent conformity to the established faith, and is void of any determinate meaning. But as there are many shades of difference between those who flatly renounce, and those who cordially embrace the doctrine of *redemption by Christ*; not a few are to be found, who go further than this, and who have a sort of general, indeterminate, and ill-understood dependance on our blessed Saviour. But their hopes, so far as they can be made out, appear to bottom on the persuasion that they are now, through Christ, become members of a new dispensation, wherein they will be tried by a more lenient rule than that to which they must have been otherwise subject. 'God, (say they,) will not now be extreme to mark what is done amiss, but will dispense with the rigorous exactions of his law: too strict indeed for such frail creatures as we are, to hope that we can fulfil it. Christianity has moderated the requisitions of Divine Justice; and all that is now required of us, is thankfully to trust to the merits of Christ for the pardon of our sins, and the acceptance of our sincere, though imperfect obedience. The frailties and infirmities to which our nature is liable, or to which our situation in life exposes us, will not be severely judged: and as it is practice that really determines the character, we may rest fairly satisfied, that if on the whole our lives be tolerably good, we shall escape with little or no punishment, and through Jesus Christ our Lord, shall be finally partakers of heavenly felicity.' Thus many persons talk about Christ, the Saviour of the *lost* and *ruined* race of Adam, who have no just idea of the plan of salvation, but are anxious to justify themselves, or at least to palliate their guilt, rather than acknowledge themselves polluted and helpless sinners, who are

possessed of no good principles till they are implanted by grace, and who stand in need of fresh supplies of light and strength, every moment of their lives.

3. It is to be feared, that various persons are to be found within the pale of the visible church, in this day of gospel light, who read the Scriptures, attend the ministry of the word, frequent the Lord's table, set up family worship, retire for private prayer, are just in their dealings, serious in their deportment, minister to the wants of the necessitous, and give liberally to the support of Sunday-schools, Missionary and Bible societies, &c. who admire themselves on account of these things, instead of blessing God for the gift of Christ Jesus, and for the supplies of His heavenly grace. They are ready to say, 'we are increased in knowledge; our attention to religious exercises is uniform; our conduct is irreproachable and commendable; we do much towards bettering the condition of the bodies and souls of our fellow-creatures; truly we walk in the footsteps of our great Master, Jesus Christ; we are always engaged with him and for him; all our hopes of salvation are drawn from the conformity there is between us and the Lord Jesus; by our increasing knowledge of His Word, and growing conformity to his law, we are become *rich, are increased with goods, and have need of nothing*; all our hope and glory is in our conformity to the precepts of the Gospel.' If these persons enjoyed daily intercourse with heaven in the means of grace; if reading, praying, hearing, and communicating, brought them fresh supplies of spiritual light, and divine love; if they grew in the knowledge of their own nothingness, and sunk deeper and deeper in self-abasement; if their eye became more and more single to God's glory; and the *love of Christ* in their souls, were the grand spring of all their zeal and benevolence, they would be happy indeed. But, alas! there may be all this *show* of religion, with those who have only the *form* of godliness, and know not the *power* thereof. Some of my readers, perhaps, will be ready to say, 'this is an hard saying,—who can bear it?' I own it is alarming doctrine to every one that is not a living member of the mystical body of Christ; but let us proceed to examine it by the light of Scripture truth, since it is to the Word and Tes-

timony that we must refer, and if those who teach us speak not according to these, it is because there is no light in them. The Holy Scriptures describe the divine life, as consisting in spiritual *union* with Christ, and represent this union by means of different expressive figures, that prove the persons under consideration to be destitute of a saving interest in the Redeemer. Do we speak of the true church, under the figure of a spiritual building? these persons must be considered as stones which *lean* against the fabric, but are not wrought *into* the same. And when we think of Christ as the heavenly Vine, and of believers as so many branches, that having been engrafted into Him, live a spiritual life in virtue of nourishment received from this living Root, such persons can only be considered as branches that entwine themselves round this Tree of Life, but do not live in virtue of any real connection therewith, each having its own root, and growing independent of any supplies communicated from Him. It is evident, that such stones are not of the building against which they *lean*; and that such branches make no part of the Vine, to which they only *seem* to belong. That great pretensions of regard to Christ are paid by some, whose hopes of eternal life are unsupported by any spiritual union with Him, is an awful truth; it demands our most serious attention and earnest prayers, that we may discover what is wrong in the foundation of our hopes, and be saved from self-deceit, which is the more dangerous when grafted upon an evangelical profession.

There is a material difference between our becoming virtuous by imitating the Lord, as the *ground* of our acceptance with God, and our being made virtuous by justification through his blood, and the sanctification of his Spirit, working in us both to *will* and to *do* of his good pleasure. The former of these sentiments is *legal*; the latter *evangelical*. One confers the praise on *self*, for copying after Christ, the other gives it all to Him who freely *forgives* us though we have nothing to pay, and powerfully *keeps* us though we are perfect weakness. Or, in other words, the former is the vain imagination of those who have no real conformity to Christ, and the latter is the blessed experience of a *gracious* soul who lives by faith in the Lord Jesus, being instructed by

his Word, and supplied by his Spirit. For, as *Mr Styles* observes, in his *Vindication of Evangelical Preaching*, (*See p. 27.*) 'When we caution a sinner against self-righteousness, we do not mean to refer to that moral virtue which forms the personal character, but to that *pride* which represents imperfect virtue as the meritorious cause of justification, and which leads its possessor to deem himself (more or less,) his *own* Saviour, and to reject Christ and his merits, as the only foundation of hope. All those, who thus rely upon their works, as the ground of their acceptance with God, we consider as 'trusting in *themselves* that they are righteous,' without any one claim to the character; for the essence of virtue must be wanting in the heart that is mercenary and confident, arrogant and proud.'

II. Concerning the dreadful *consequences* of Self-righteousness, I would observe,

1. Such characters, whatever favourable opinion they entertain of themselves, or in whatever repute they may be held by others, are 'sensual not having the Spirit.' Their hearts remain unchanged by grace; and they themselves are but 'whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.'—Civilized nature, says *Flavel*, is unsanctified nature still; and without sanctification there is no salvation, *See Heb. xii. 14.* Civility adorneth nature, but doth not always change it. Moral virtues are (often like) so many sweet flowers strewed over a dead corps, which hide its loathsomeness, but do not inspire it with life. Morality hides and covers, but never mortifies, nor cures the corruptions of nature; and mortified these corruptions must be, even in the best nature in the world, or you cannot be saved. Morality is neither produced as saving grace is, nor works such effects as saving grace worketh. *First*, There are no pangs of repentance introducing it: it may have cost many an aching head, but no aching heart for sin, i. e. no such distressed outcries, as, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' *Secondly*, Nor doth it produce such humility, self-abasement, heavenly tempers, and tendencies of soul, as grace doth. *Thirdly*, Civility is not only found in multitudes that are out of Christ, but may justly be considered

as the cause of their remaining Christless ; being so dazzled with the lustre of their own morality, that they see no need of Christ, nor feel any want of His righteousness : and this is the ruin of your souls.' (See 12th Road to Hell blocked up.) Moreover, says *Flavel*, self-righteous people labour under a fatal mistake, in all the religious exercises in which they engage, for 'Carnal men furnish the materials of their duties out of the strength of their parts : a strong memory and a good invention are the fountains from which they draw. But it is otherwise with souls truly gracious ; they have ordinarily a *threefold* assistance from the Spirit, in reference to their duties. *First*, Before duties exciting them to it, making them feel their need of it, like the call of 'a good appetite,' 'Thou saidst, Seek my face ; my heart answered, Thy face, Lord, will I seek,' Ps. xxvii. 8. *Secondly*, In their duties, furnishing both matter and affection, (Rom. viii. 26.) guiding them not only as to *what* to ask, but also *how* to ask. *Thirdly*, After the duties, helping them not only to suppress the pride and vanity of their spirits, but also to wait on God for the accomplishment of their desires.'

Thus a pharisaical spirit prevents men from closing in with Christ, in order to the acceptance of their persons, and the sanctification of their natures ; leaving them destitute of the favourable regard of Almighty God, and void of the image of his Son, Jesus Christ.

2. The pharisaical are almost sure to give way, and fall in the day of severe trial, whether these trials arise from alluring temptations or threatening persecutions. Those who have no hold of Christ by living faith, and receive no supplies of grace from his unexhaustable fulness, must needs be unable to stand their ground at such times. Yea, the Lord threatens to make those a public example, whose hearts are false towards Him. 'This is thy lot, the portion of thy measure from me, saith the Lord ; because thou hast forgotten me and trusted in falsehood ; Therefore will I discover thy skirts upon thy face, that thy shame may appear,' i. e. I will expose thee to the greatest shame in the day of trial, permitting thee to fall under the power of the adversary, who shall strip thee of all thy fair apparel, of pretended

and imaginary rectitude, and shew thee wounded, naked, and degraded : the pity of the benevolent, and the laughing-stock of the ungodly, who will look upon thy nakedness, and rejoice when ' shameful spewing shall be on thy glory.' Yea, the abandoned will exult over thy fall, saying, ' Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!' Numerous, alas! are the examples that might be brought forward as a comment upon that scriptural truth; that pride is followed by a downfall, and that an haughty spirit is the forerunner of an overthrow. It was not long after King David had boasted, that his mountain was so strong, he should never be moved, that he fell into the snare of the devil respecting the matter of Uriah the Hittite, by which he stained all his glory, gave the enemies of religion occasion to blaspheme, and brought down upon himself and family the judgments of God. And almost the next thing we hear of Peter the apostle, after his self-dependant protestations of being ready to go with his beloved Master to prison and to death, is, that, with oaths and curses, he denied that he had ever known Him; thus proving unto all the generations of God's people, that we are perfect weakness when left to ourselves.

The following instance of the destructive tendency of a self-conceited and disdainful temper, is mentioned by *Milner* in his Church History, cent. iii. chap. 16. ' There were at Antioch a presbyter and a layman, the former was named Sapphicus, and the latter Nicephorus; these men through some misunderstanding, after a remarkable intimacy, became so completely estranged, that they would not even salute each other in the street. Nicephorus after a time relented, begged forgiveness of his fault, and took repeated measures to procure reconciliation,—but in vain. He even ran to the house of Sapphicus, and throwing himself at his feet, entreated his forgiveness for the Lord's sake:—the presbyter continued obstinate. In this situation of things, the persecution of Valerian reached them suddenly. Sapphicus was carried before the governor, and ordered to sacrifice in obedience to the Emperor's edict. ' We christians, (replied Sapphicus,) acknowledge for our King Jesus Christ, who is the true God, and the Crea-

tor of heaven and earth ; perish idols, which can do neither good nor harm !' The Prefect tormented him a long time, and then commanded that he should be beheaded. Nicephorus, hearing of this, runs up to him, as he is led to execution, and renews in vain the same supplications. The executioners deride his humility as perfect folly. But he perseveres, and attends Sapricius to the place of execution. There he reminds him, it is written, ' Ask and it shall be given you.' But not even the mention of the Word of God itself, and of a word so suitable to Sapricius's own circumstances, could affect his obstinate and unforgiving temper. (I am pretty sure, my readers will not be surprised to hear what follows ;) Sapricius, however suddenly forsaken of God, recants, and promises to sacrifice. Nicephorus, amazed, exhorts him to the contrary ; but in vain. He, (Nicephorus,) then says to the executioners, ' I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, whom Sapricius hath renounced.' The officers return to give an account to the governor, who ordered Nicephorus to be beheaded. The account, adds *Dr Milner*, ends here ;—but if Sapricius lived to repent, as I hope he did, he might learn what a dangerous thing it is for a miserable mortal, whose sufficiency and perseverance rest entirely on divine grace ; to despise, condemn, or exult, over his brother. The LAST became the FIRST :—and God shewed his people wonderfully by this case, that He will support them in their sufferings for his name ; but that, at the same time, he would have them to be humble, meek, and forgiving. This is the first instance I have seen, of a man attempting to suffer for Christ on *philosophical* grounds ;—and it failed : Self-sufficiency and pure christianity are, in their nature, distinct and opposite : Let no man attempt to unite or mix together such heterogeneous and jarring principles.'

I might also make mention of the fall of Archbishop *Cramer*, of *Dr Dodd*, and a variety of other persons ; who, fainting in the day of severe or alluring trial, gave evident proof that their spiritual strength was small. I shall, however, leave it to my readers, to consider the cases of these persons, and of any others with whose history they may be acquainted. But, I pray God, that all who read these pages, may know His grace in truth, and

deriving constant supplies from the great Fountain, may be enabled to stand the fiery trial, should the Lord again permit the faith of his people to be proved, as it was about 200 years ago, in many parts of Europe; as appears from the following extract, taken from *Fox's* book of Martyrs, book iv. § 3. 'After the defeat of the Protestant armies, in 1630, a horrid persecution succeeded; the severities of which were such, that lesser evils might, in comparison, be accounted happiness. A cave, appeared a palace; wild roots, delicacies; and a rock, a bed of down. Those who were taken, experienced the most dreadful tortures that cruelty could invent; and by their constancy evinced, that a real christian can encounter every difficulty, and despise every danger, in the cause of truth.' To God's name belongs the glory; through him strengthening us, we can do all things. And 'blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garment, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.'

3. The Pharisee will be shut out of heaven, notwithstanding all his dealings with religion. He cannot be admitted into the everlasting kingdom of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, having no *title* to that inheritance, and enjoying no prerequisite *qualification* for that heavenly state. None are heirs of glory, but those who are born of God, by the power of the Holy Ghost; but 'if children, then (are we) heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ:' Moreover, 'the Spirit Itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.' And 'now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ,—Therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.' But as the faith of the gospel alone, is that which gives us a *title* to heaven, all those who are destitute of this faith, let their attainments be whatever they may, have no title whatever to the privileges of the New Jerusalem, since they have not taken up their freedom of that state; but are seeking admission in their own right, to the contempt of the grace of God, and of course to their exclusion from the holy city. But the want of *right* is not the only deficiency in the Christless, there is no *meekness* possessed by them for that spiritual enjoy-

ment, and, as remaining in a carnal state, they are incapable of relishing the pure and exalted pleasures that flow from the throne of God and of the Lamb. Believers, on the other hand, prove the power of Christ's resurrection, and are no longer carnally-minded, which is death; but transformed by the renewing of their souls in righteousness, they are spiritually-minded, the effect of which is life and peace. In their natural state, they, like the rest of the children of men, were 'earthly, sensual, and devilish;' but now, being 'risen with Christ, they seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God—Therefore, when Christ, who is their life, shall appear; then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.' While living upon earth, their daily intercourse has been with heaven, 'their fellowship was with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; the Spirit taking of the things that are Christ's, and revealing them unto his people. For them 'to live was Christ, (i. e. to hold communion with Christ and shew forth the honour of His name,) and to die is gain.' Here, all their boast and joy was occasioned by partaking of the benefit of the atonement, it being their constant language, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ, by which I am crucified to the world, and the world unto me.' The enjoyments of heaven, are his solace in the wilderness of this earthly state; he has Bread to eat that the world knoweth not of; the Lord himself spreads a table before him; even in the presence of his enemies; he anointeth his head with an holy unction, and his cup of spiritual consolation is frequently caused to overflow. 'Surely, (says he,) goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.' Again, he adds, in the spirit of lively gratitude, and ardent benevolence, 'My soul shall make her boast in the Lord, the humble shall hear thereof and be glad.—O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.' Thus the believer is training up for heaven, and will feel himself quite in his element, when permitted to join the upper church, and sing with them, 'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His

Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.' —Alas! for the Pharisee, he knows nothing of this evangelical experience, has no taste for these spiritual exercises, and cannot join the redeemed in their triumphant song. He dwells upon his *own* excellencies, the praises of heaven do not accord with his feelings, nor is he any suitable companion for those who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

In fine, the self-righteous cannot be admitted into heaven, as they are destitute of the pre-requisite qualifications, which alone can give a *meetness* for that state of delight. What then, must become of them? O, sad to tell! they must be shut out of heaven, and with 'the fearful and the abominable, have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.' Well may *Bazil* bring in Satan as insulting over these characters; saying to Christ, 'I have them! for all thy blood and miracles, thy wooings and beseechings, thy knockings and strivings. I have cozened Thee out of them at the very gates of heaven.' O how dreadful! after so fair a show; to have the only Judge and Saviour say, 'I never knew you,—depart from me.'—'How camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?—Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' Well may they weep, when they behold the patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles, and believers of all nations and ages, sitting down in the kingdom of God, and themselves thrust out. Do, let me persuade you, to close in with Christ by faith, and to find Him an habitation in your believing hearts; then, He will shortly receive you into his heavenly kingdom: to which place may God bring you all for his mercies sake, Amen.

III. I shall now offer a few INFERENCES, relating to the Conceited; the Fallen; the Advancement of the kingdom of Christ in the world; and the Design of God in permitting us to be Tried.

1. As to the *Conceited*; it is a lamentable fact, that the persons who are the most reprehensible, are those who are least likely to regard admonition; for it is a general rule, that professors grow proud, in proportion as they become carnal and formal.

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And as glow-worms shine most in the dark, so the less these persons behold of the glory of God, the more splendid are their attainments in their own eyes. It was long since observed, in the book of Job, that 'vain (empty) man, would be wise, (i. e. has a high conceit of himself,) though he be born like a wild ass's colt.' When these Pharisees address the Lord with, a 'God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are,' corrupt, depraved, and sinful: we only discover how vain-conceit is capable of blinding the understanding; for here is an address to God, by one who knows him not.—Self-commendation, without self-acquaintance.—Boasted superiority, without real difference.—Expressions of thanks without true gratitude.—And strong confidence without real security. It was a fine saying of *Martha the Hottentot*, in answer to, 'What is the difference between a real and a sham christian?—Sir, difference is not only what we know about Christ, but difference is between power of Christ upon the soul. One know about Christ by book; the other, by power of Spirit upon heart. They who know Christ only by book, very proud, and know nothing of themselves after all, but they who know Christ by Spirit very humble.' *Burder's Mis. Anecdotes*, page 265. The merely understanding different gospel truths, only tends to puff up the mind, as the body is puffed or swelled up in a dropsy. But when divine love is planted in the affections, it builds up the soul in the image of God. 'Never (says *Flavel*,) did religion thrive in the world, since men's heads have been so overheated with notions and controversies, and their hearts have so sensibly cooled in their closet-work. Oh! that you would be more in your closets, and oftener upon your knees. Oh! that you would look into the Bible, then into your hearts, and then to God, saying with David, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; prove me, and try my reins, and see if there be any iniquity in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.' The consciousness, that we are pensioners on divine bounty, should teach us all to be thankful and humble; for, depend upon it, 'he who makes use of God's gifts to feed and strengthen his pride and vanity, will be sure to be stripped of the goods wherewith he trusts, and fall down into the condemnation of the devil, We

have nothing but what we have received; we deserve nothing of what we possess; and it is only God's infinite mercy which keeps us in the possession of the blessings which we now enjoy. Dr A. Clarke, on John i. 20. Our best performances are so far from being meritorious, that God will not accept them, but as they are offered upon that Altar which sanctifieth the gift. And our most ardent praises are so far from being of intrinsic value, that God will not regard this incense without it is enflamed by the fire of His Altar; or, in other words, offered up by the aid of the Holy Spirit. See the account of Nadab and Abihu, being consumed for offering incense with strange or unhallowed fire, Lev. x. 1. 2. Sure all our righteousness is of God. 'The Author of faith and salvation is God alone. It is He that works in us both to *will* and to *do*. He is the sole giver of every good gift, and the sole Author of every good work. There is no more of Power than of Merit in man; but as all merit is in the Son of God, in what he has done and suffered for us, so all power is in the Spirit of God. And therefore, every man, in order to believe unto salvation, must receive the Holy Ghost. This is essentially necessary to every christian, not in order to his working miracles, but in order to Faith, Peace, Joy, and Love, the ordinary fruits of the Spirit.' *Wesley's Farther Appeal*, Part 1. i. § 6. Mr. Bradford, who received the crown of Martyrdom in 1555, used, when he heard of any malefactor being condemned to suffer an ignominious death, to clap his hand upon his breast, and say—'The seed of all those villanies, which brought that unhappy wretch to the gibbet, were sown *here*. And, if they have not sprung up into the same detestable deeds, unto divine grace; unto divine grace, *alone*, be the glory.'

2. A word to the *Fallen* professor; may God give you grace to hear, and to recover yourself out of the snare of the devil. Alas, for thee! the pride of thy heart has deceived thee to thy undoing, and thou art sadly taught, that it is not for those who put on the harness, to boast as they may do who put it off. You entered into the field of battle, it may be, with confidence of success, but the temptation proved too alluring for thee to resist, the suffering was too great for thee to bear; so, you have stained

your beautiful garments, and throwing away your armour, have fled from the field naked and wounded. All who look upon you see your shame, and you are covered with confusion. To disgrace you the more, your adversaries were not so dreadful, as those whom some of your fellow-soldiers in the cause of Christ have successfully encountered. And oh! how cutting is that satire of the prophet's, when applied to thee by some spectator of thy conduct, who addresses thee, saying, 'If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied (or defeated) thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?' Oh! that God may bless thy defeat, to shew thee thy weakness, and lead thee to the Rock that is higher than thou. Now, surely, thy vain pretensions to superior excellency are gone, and thou beginnest to discover that thy strength is perfect weakness; God grant this knowledge may be full and abiding. Oh! thou degraded one, smite upon thy thigh for anguish of heart, be ashamed, yea, even confounded; and bemoan thyself before the Lord, *See Jer. xxxi. 18.—19.* Yet, do not despair, God waits to be gracious; take hold of His strength, and thou shalt yet become victorious. But the most perfect creature left to itself, (as the self-dependant ever will be,) must fall into ruin. This truth has been exemplified in the fall of angels and of Adam, who fell though created in a perfect state. Divine preservation alone, is the prop which supports the creature from ruin. And whatever grace has been already communicated unto us, we must still look to God for fresh supplies, as we hope to hold on and hold out unto the end. 'Grace itself, (says *Flavel*,) is but a creature and therefore a dependant being; it is but a stream, depending upon the supply of the Fountain. If the Fountain let not forth Itself, what becomes of the stream?' I shall close this head, with the advice *Dr Owen* (*Glory of Christ*, Part ii. chap. 16.) gives for Healing Backsliding. 'First, Be frequent in prayer, *take with you words*, and pray—for pardon of sin—and for a sense of acceptance. Secondly, Make an affectionate Confession of the sin, wherein thy backsliding did consist, and which was the occasion thereof. *Ashur shall not save us:*

(God expects a full and free confession.) *Thirdly*, Enter into a renewed engagement with the Lord, to renounce all other hopes.

—The Cause that should lead you to this is, *in Thee the fatherless shall find mercy*—The effect shall be praise and thanksgiving: *so will we render the calves of our lips.* Hosea xiv. 1—7.

—It was an excellent resolution of a christian once, who receiving an eminent mercy, at the same time that he felt himself under the power of a special corruption, said, ‘ Well now, I will go forth in the strength of this mercy to mortify and subdue that corruption.’ Oh! that all who profess the religion of Jésus Christ, would mark God’s mercies, and go and do likewise.

3. The *success* of the Gospel among the children of men, is closely connected with the consistency of the conduct, and the warmth of the affections, of those who are professedly the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not enough, that learned Apologists defend the outworks of christianity; men desire to *see* its power manifested in the lives and tempers of its professors, before they will be convinced of its importance. In learned apologies, they *see* a *painted Sun*, but in the conduct and conversation of the pious, they *feel* the influence of a *heavenly Flame*. Hence, judicious church members, with enlightened understandings in theological questions, but whose affections are languid towards Christ and his salvation, do more to prejudice people against the religion of the Bible, by their cold heartedness, than they are able to effect in behalf of the truth, by all their learned arguments. *Scott* observes, concerning those who are called by the name of Christ, and reluctantly perform a scanty measure of external duties, with an evident indifference about, and weariness in them; that ‘ their evil tempers, unholy actions, and carnal attachment to the world, to its pleasures, company, and interests, dishonour Him more than even their apostacy could do; and in the event it will be equally fatal to their own souls. For, in this manner, they give numbers an unfavourable opinion of christianity, as if it were an unholy religion; whilst others conclude, that it can afford no real satisfaction; or its professors would not be so heartless in it, or so fond of borrowing a little pleasure from the world; or that it is not worth much, as they grudge the lit-

tle it costs them, and will not give up any thing of supposed value for the sake thereof: In short, such professors are as traitors in the camp, who are always more dangerous than open enemies. In fine, we need never expect to see a general spread of the blessed gospel, until its professors *feel* as well as understand christianity, and *live* as well as profess the truth: O Lord, send forth a people, who, feeling that Christ is precious, and walking as He also walked, may successfully exhort others to be followers of them as dear children; thy Spirit accompanying their word with power and demonstration of the Holy Ghost.

4. Trials, and wisely ordered Afflictions, are sent by God for the good of those who profess his name. And there is frequently a vast difference, between a saint's first meeting with afflictions, and his parting with them. He entertained them at first with trembling, on account of the evil he feared to receive from them; after a season he began to be reconciled to them, as meant for his advantage; and at length, when he parts with them, it is rejoicing on account of the good he has derived through their instrumentality, which causes him to smile on them, and bless them in the name of the Lord. 'By these trials, pride and self-confidence are destroyed and mortified in the saints, as much as by any thing in the world. We never see what poor weak creatures we are, until we come to the trial. It is said, 'God led Israel through the desert, to *prove* them and to *humble* them' (Deut. viii. 2.) When we are proved, then we are humble. Those that over-reckon their graces before the trial, see they must come to another account, and take new measures of themselves after they have been upon trial. Ah! little did I think, saith one, that I had so much love for the world, and so little for God, until affliction tried it; I could not have believed that ever the creature had got so deep into my heart, until Providence either threatened or made a separation, and then I found it, says another; I thought, says a third, I had been rich in faith, until such a danger befel me, or such a want began to pinch hard; and then I saw, how unable I was to trust God for protection or provision, &c. Oh! it is a good thing, that our hearts be kept humble and lowely, how rich soever they may be in grace.' *Flavel.*

‘Blessed is the man that endureth temptation : for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.’

May all my readers be enabled with David to say, ‘Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty ; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.’—‘Now unto Him, that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his Glory, with exceeding joy: To the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen.’

FINIS.

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The Author begs leave to inform his numerous Subscribers, and the public in general, that he shall complete this set of Lectures in the next number: which will consist of a Critical and Practical Lecture on Rev. i. ch. the remainder of the General Observations; and a Brief Sketch of the Geography of the Seven Churches of Asia, with a small Map, shewing the relative situation of these churches. Those persons who wish for a fuller account of these parts, will, he trusts, find every desire gratified, when his History of Asia Minor, for which he now is, and has long been collecting materials, shall come out: he hopes this work will be ready for the public, before the close of the present year. He has also in contemplation, a Treatise on the Glorified State of the Church, as set forth in the xxi. and xxii. Chapters of the Revelation, which State he designs further to illustrate by that interesting, though much neglected science, the Heraldry of the Bible: This work will be proceeded with, God granting health and strength, so soon as the author's different avocations will permit.

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FIRST CHAPTER OF THE REVELATION.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS Book is called the *Revelation*, or *Apocalypse* from the Greek verb ἀποκαλύπτω *apokaluptoo*, which signifies *to reveal* something that was aforesometimes hidden or concealed. The title of *The Revelation*, is aptly expressive of the properties of this Book, whether we consider the wonderful predictions it contains relative to the affairs of the church, to the end of time, and to the commencement of the eternal state of mankind ; or whether we confine our attention to the display of character the Lord Christ has made of the Asiatic Churches, to whom the seven epistles are directed. It is with these churches, rather than the wonderful prophecies of this book, that these Lectures are designed to bring my readers acquainted. And I was induced to give my labours to illucidate these Epistles to the seven churches of Asia, both from their having been slightly passed over, by the various learned authors, who have written at large upon the prophetical parts of this book, and also from a persuasion that these highly figurative portions of God's Word, contained some of the most important instructions, with which the church of Christ was ever blessed.

The book of the Revelation, according to Irenæus, was written about the year of Christ 90, or 96, in the island of Patmos, whether St John had been banished by the emperor *Domitian*. But Sir Isaac Newton places the writing of it earlier, viz. in the

time of Nero; or about A. D. 60, or 66; I will not conceal the fact, that some persons have attributed this book to the arch-heretic *Cerintus*: but the ancients* unanimously ascribe it to John, the Son of Zebedee, and brother of James; whom the Greek fathers call the *Divine*,† by way of eminence, to distinguish him from John the Baptist.

EXPOSITION, &c.

Ver. 1. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to shew unto his servants, things which must shortly come to pass, and he sent and signified it, by his angel unto his servant, John.*

The Lord Jesus Christ, Who was in the beginning with God, and Who is God, (John i. 1—2.) condescended, for the sake of fallen man, to become the Messenger of the Father's will. In this capacity he was first made a little lower than the angels, to the end that he might be capable of submitting to the sufferings of death: but now he is crowned with glory and honour, (Heb. i. 9.—ii. 7.—9.) yet he still remains the medium of communion between heaven and earth; hence it is said, that God, i. e. God the Father in the economy of grace, gave this Revelation to the church's Glorified Head, in behalf of his servants upon earth.

The Lord Jesus Christ did not descend in *person* upon this occasion, but an angel of the Lord made the necessary manifestation to the apostle's mind. It is very common in Scripture language, to attribute the revelations God made of Himself in old times, to His interposing Word, or the divine *Λογος* Logos; thus it is said of Samuel the prophet, i. Sam. iii. 21. that 'Je-

* Justin, Irenæus, Origen, Cyprian, Clemens of Alexandria, Testullian, and all the fathers of the fourth, fifth, and the following centuries, quote the Revelation, as a book then acknowledged to be canonical.

† The title *Θεολογος* the *Divine*, which is here given to the writer of these visions, and not *Αποστολν* the *Apostle*, is not from any imagination of those who affixed it, that the apostle *John* was not the writer of them, but because that title was by the ancients, *Origen* especially, bestowed on this apostle in respect of the *Divinity* and sublimity of his manner of writing; observable in his Gospel; and particularly, because he began it with setting down the Divinity of Christ, (whereas others begin with his birth, or humanity,) * *Θεος ην ο Λογος* is by an easy contraction made *Θεολογος* (See Dr Hammond.)

Jehovah revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh, by the Word of the Lord ; i. e. as we learn from John i. 1. the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the essential Word of God ; also called the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, (Heb. i. 3.) For no man hath seen God (the Divine Essence,) at any time ; but the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. (John i. 18.) From the knowledge mankind had of this truth in old times, the kings of the East took upon them the like state of declaring their wills, giving their opinions, &c. by a *deputy*—a *go-between*—a *middle man* ; and in Abyssinia, where the king conceals himself from the view of his subjects, this officer, according to Mr Bruce, is called **KAL-HATZE**, i. e. *the Voice, or Word of the King*. In like manner, the Grand-Seignior, as may be seen in any accounts of the ambassadors' visits to Turkey, never speaks in giving public audience *himself*, but carries on all communications by means of his vizier, or **KAL-HATZE**, *the Word of the King*, as he is called in Abyssinia. And even in Europe, the kings of France used to direct the keeper of the seals to speak in their name ; and to come still nearer home, the lord-chancellor of England, prorogues, &c. the parliament, by his majesty's pleasure, speaking in the king's name, though in his majesty's presence ; *q.* the British **Kal-Hatze**.—These usages help to explain, what is meant by calling the Lord Jesus Christ the **WORD**, or *the Word of Jehovah* ; that is, the medium through Whom the Living God reveals himself to mankind. And since this character of the Redeemer is fully explained unto the church by the incarnation of the Lord Christ, there no longer remains a necessity for his personal appearance, until he comes to judgment ; therefore He did not personally manifest Himself unto his servant John, when He gave him the Revelation, but *He sent and signified it by his angel*, who acted as his **Kal-Hatze**, or the word of Immanuel, i. e. of God *with us*. I would offer the following conjecture, with deference to the teachers of the church of Christ ; but it appears probable to me, that, of the recorded manifestations of Deity under the Old Testament dispensation, some were made by the **Kal-Hatze**, or word of Immanuel ? That it was apprehended such

a circumstance could take place, is evident from the phraseology of the old prophet, recorded i. Kings, xiii. 18. He does not say, that the *Lord* spake to him; or, that the *Word* of the *Lord* spake to him; but he uses the following circuitous mode of expression, ‘An *angel*—spake to me by—the *Word*—of the *Lord*;’ as if he had said, an *angel*, commissioned to personify the *Word* of the *Lord*, spake—so and so—unto me. And See CALMET’S Fragments. No ix.—How great is the majesty of the living God, and how condescending his mercy, to manifest himself to the children of men, and at length take our nature into mysterious union with Himself! And who can conceive aright of the majesty of that Saviour, before whom every knee shall bow, and to whom every tongue shall confess, to the glory of God the Father. See Phil. ii. 6—11.

The order of the Revelation is; *first*, It proceeds from the *Father* of mercies; *secondly*, It was given by Him to the Church’s glorified Head; *thirdly*, He gave it unto His angel, whom He *fourthly*, sent to signify it to his servant John, in behalf of the church. Thus, blessed be God! the Lord Jesus in his state of exaltation, continues to execute his prophetic office, by revealing to his servants the mind and will of His and our heavenly Father.

The things predicted in this book, are said to be such as *must shortly come to pass*. If we understand these words, as bearing relation to the eternity of the Speaker, the whole prophecy may be said to be speedily accomplished; for what are two or three thousand years, when brought into comparison with the eternity of His duration? (See Ps. xc. 4.) But if we consider them, in reference to the persons in whose behalf they were spoken, they are a declaration, that the prophecies relate to a chain of events, that must shortly begin to unfold themselves.

Ver. 2. *Who bare record of the Word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.*

As the Revelation was not granted unto John, merely for his *private* use or personal instruction and support, but was revealed unto him by the angel of the Lord, for the benefit of the church in all nations and ages; so John, in obedience to the command

of the Lord, *See*, ver. 19, faithfully recorded that which he heard and saw. In one instance, indeed, *See* Chap. x. 4. John was forbid to write what he had heard; but this only affords an exception to a general rule, and this instance alone excepted, we have reason to believe that the Divine has given us a full relation of the wonderful vision, with which he was favoured. Thus God has granted unto us, who have the word of life put into our hands, the advantage of that Revelation which His servant John originally enjoyed.

This verse may be considered, as giving us a general view of the nature of the contents of this book. They are the faithful words of God, as testified by Jesus Christ, who employed his angel as his mouth on this occasion. This verse, also, holds out the character of John as one on whom we may depend, as giving us a faithful representation of all that he saw and heard.

Ver. 3. *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, &c.*

In these words it is proper to mark the difference of number here used, *he* that readeth and *they* that hear, the Reader being spoken of in the *Singular* as being *one* only, while the Hearers are noticed in the *Plural*, as being *many*. This is no doubt in reference to all the books of the ancients being manuscripts, in which case only one person could, in general, read at a time, the expence of writing out fair copies being too heavy to admit of a sufficiency for each christian to possess one; but many persons at the same time, might be edified by hearing the book read.—Of God's mercy, Bibles are multiplied in our day: there are enough in these happy lands to supply every family, and every individual with one. They are also afforded so cheap, that the labouring classes of society may procure them for themselves; and moreover, hundreds of volumes of this precious Book, are distributed gratis among the poor every year, so that all persons who can read may do it for themselves from time to time.

A *blessing* is promised to him who readeth, and to those who hear, the words of this prophecy. This should encourage us to look into this book frequently, in humble dependance on Him by whom the Revelation was given, to the end that we may be

blessed by the God of all grace. But how can those christian professors expect God's blessing, who, neglecting to make themselves acquainted with the contents of this book, are living in the practical contempt of the Lord's command? O christians! be guilty of this culpable neglect no longer; but studiously consider this part of God's Word. Yet, we must all guard against the mistake, that the mere act of reading or hearing the words of this book; or even of gaining a considerable degree of understanding in the same, is all that is required of us in order to salvation; no, its important truths must dwell in our hearts so as to produce fruit in our lives, for that reader and those hearers of this prophecy, alone, are truly blessed, *who keep or observe to perform, those things which are written therein.* That religious knowledge, and that alone does us real good, which subdues our Wills, sanctifies our Affections, and shines forth in a Holy deportment. Hear what the Lord Christ says, concerning the use to be made of religious knowledge, 'Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and *doeth them*, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and *doeth them not*, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended and the floods came, and the wind blew and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.' We are moreover exhorted to see to it, that our knowledge be of the practical kind, by the annexed warning; *for the time is at hand*, the time when this prophecy shall be accomplished: when the righteous, and the wicked shall be eternally separated. It is but a little time, before the Lord will say to the righteous, 'Come ye blessed of my Father,' and to the wicked, 'Depart from Me ye cursed.'

Concerning the *three* foregoing verses, it is observed by the Rev. *W. Ward*, that what has been usually called the Preface, is no more than a general Title to the whole book; which expressed concisely, and put into the form of a Title, would appear thus,

A REVELATION FROM GOD;

OR,

A Prophecy of Events at Hand,

BY

JESUS CHRIST;

SENT THROUGH HIS ANGEL.

Witnessed, and Written

BY JOHN, HIS SERVANT.

(Blessed is he that readeth, &c)

FROM ver. 4, to the 9, is Introductory, and the vision itself begins to open upon us at ver. 10, where we read of John's hearing behind him, a great voice as of a trumpet.

Ver. 4. *John to the seven churches which are in Asia ; grace be unto you, and peace.*

This Book was written by John, in behalf of the *Seven Churches* of Christ, assembling for public worship in the Lydian or proconsular *Asia*. We may justly consider these words, *John, to the seven churches which are in Asia*, as being the DEDICATION of the Book by John, to the Christians of these churches. But as a Book, when published, though dedicated to an individual, or to a society of men, as a token or respect or affection, or perhaps in order to illustrate some references to local circumstances, or an account of its contents having an original reference to them, is not designed to be restricted to the person or persons to whom it is dedicated, but is through them, as it were, made public for the good of all persons in like circumstances ; so this book is sent, through the medium of the seven churches of *Asia*, to the churches of Christ, of every age, and of every country on the face of the earth. Dr *S. Clarke*, compares this chapter to a magnificent porch, too grand for any private building, or to be designed merely for the seven churches of *Asia Minor*, but

meant for the universal church, considered as a stately building.

He wishes them *grace* and *peace*, in the name of the Lord. By *grace* I understand the holy principles which God implants in the hearts of those who believe; for gospel faith unites us to the holy Saviour, who lives and walks in his people. And *peace* is the fruit of righteousness, or the joy communicated to the gracious soul from the Spirit of Holiness. As we grow in the former, we shall abound in the latter; and in that place, where all is unsullied purity, uninterrupted pleasures will flow and abound forevermore.

Ver. 4. 5. This Grace and Peace is to be derived *from* the Triune Deity; hence, John wishes it to the churches in the name of HIM *who is, and who was, and who is to come*; and *from the seven spirits which are before His throne*; and *from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the First begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth.*

The phrase HIM, *who is, and who was, and who is to come*, or as it might be rendered with equal propriety, *who ever shall be*, is simply a paraphrase of the word JEHOVAH, or the *Self-existent*, and relates to God the FATHER in the covenant of grace; or, as I might express it, to the Deity considered *impersonally*, or without regard to personality. By *the seven Spirits which are before the throne*, I understand the HOLY SPIRIT, in His plenitude, or fullness of gracious operations; seven being a mystical number, significant of *perfection*. The number seven, may also be in allusion to the number of characteristic churches, to whom these Epistles were originally dedicated; and See Church of *Sardis*, Part First. i. § 1. The titles given to the LORD JESUS are *Three*; the *first* relates to the *varacity* of all His declarations, as the Great PROPHET of the church; in which capacity He is *The Faithful Witness*. This character is enlarged upon in the epistle to the Church of *Laodicea*, Part First, i § 1. The *second* title of the Lord Jesus, concerns his *Priestly* office, in which capacity He *lives* to intercede for us, though he once became obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross, for us men, and for our offences. But He who voluntarily laid down his life, resumed it again at his pleasure, to retain

it to the ages of eternity ; hence, He is justly said to be *the First-begotten of the dead*. The Lord Jesus, is He who liveth, though he once died ; and behold he is alive for evermore. (ver. 18.) The *third* part of this description, belongs to His **KINGLY** office ; for He who atoned for us on Calvary, has all power given him, both in heaven and in earth, (Mat. xxviii. 18.) He reigns enthroned at the right hand of the Majesty on high, (Heb. i. 3.) and as the great Governor of the world, and the glorified Head of the church, he bears the name of **KING of Kings**, and **LORD of Lords** ; (Rev. xix. 16.) or as it is worded in the text, He is *the PRINCE of the kings of the earth*. Thus, the section contains at once the doctrine of the Trinity, and the offices of the Lord Jesus Christ, and seems to intimate to us, that all the Persons of the ever blessed Trinity, are united for the salvation of sinners, and that Christ bears his threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King, with the same benovolent design.—May the Lord grant us the experimental knowledge of Him, whom thus to know is life everlasting ; then shall we also join in the following ascription of praise, and sing—

Ver. 5, 6. *Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood ; and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ;* to Him be glory and dominion, forever and ever, Amen.* There are *three* different, yet connected benefits, for which believers are called upon, in this sentence, to praise the Lord : *First*, for being *washed in the blood of Christ*. *Secondly*, for being *made kings*. And *Thirdly*, for being *constituted priests unto God*.

First, The Lord Christ is praised by his people, for having washed them from their sins in, or with, His own blood. Sin is of a polluting nature, and as such renders us obnoxious to the wrath of a holy and a just God, and none can be admitted into His presence, till their iniquities are purged away. Hence, a variety of expressive washings with water, and of still more significant purgations with blood, were appointed under the law, to

* This phrase, *Kings and Priests unto God*, is taken out of the *Jerusalem Targum*. Ex. xix. 6. The Hebrew reads *a kingdom of priests*—the *Septuagint* renders it *a royal priesthood*, which is the phrase used i. Peter ii. 9

serve as types of gospel grace. I beg leave to lay a few instances of these purgations of blood before my readers. When Aaron and his sons were to be consecrated, that they might officiate in the Tabernacle of the Lord, in behalf of the tribes of Israel, they were figuratively purified, by the application of blood to different parts of their garments, and of their persons, see Exodus xxix 19—21. The consecration of the high-priest among the ancient Romans, bore a considerable resemblance to this expressive ceremony, which *Calmet* details in the following words: ‘The Roman priest clothed with a garment of silk, his head covered with a crown of gold, and adorned with sacred ribbands, was conducted into a subterranean place over which there was a floor of planks pierced through with many holes. On this floor they sacrificed a bullock, whose blood was freely poured out on the planks or floor; which, running through the holes, fell upon the priest, who stood under to receive the sacred aspersion, and who, in order to be completely covered with the blood, took care to present the whole of his body; his clothes, face, eyes, nose, lips, and even his tongue, to receive the drops of blood falling through the pierced floor above. Being completely covered with this sanguineous shower, he ascended from this subterranean place, and was acknowledged and adored by the people as *Pontifex Maximus*.’ Thus even the heathen expressed by their rites, the necessity of those persons who stood between them and the objects of their religious worship, being purified by blood. Under the law of Moses, this purgation by blood was extended to the people as well as to the priests, since they also were to be brought nigh unto God, therefore, ‘when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves, and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, (containing the words of the covenant,) and all the people.—And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission,’ or pardon of sin, and of course no freedom of access unto the Lord our God, who is a Being of spotless purity.—O what tongue can express, or what mind conceive the blessedness that accompanies being cleansed

from sin, and favourably regarded by God? and this salvation is procured by Christ. If we enjoy this blessing, it is as a fruit of the love of Jesus to our souls, who has *washed us from our sine in His own Blood*. This sentence carries with it a peculiar emphasis. The Levitical priests sprinkled the people indeed with *blood*, but it was not their *own* blood, but only the blood of bulls and of goats, which they had shed on this occasion according to the law. But the Lord Jesus Christ, the great High-priest of our profession, poured out His *Own* Blood for our redemption. He poured out even his heart's blood, and washes us therein from all our sins — Enjoying the benefit of this purgation, may 'we draw near (unto God,) with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.'

Secondly, Being cleansed from their defilements, and favourably regarded by the Lord, they are promoted to honour in his house, being henceforth treated as princes of the blood-royal. If we admire the conduct of *Evilmerodach*, king of Babylon, who brought *Jehoiachin*, king of Judah, out of prison, causing his prison garments to be changed for those that were expressive of royal dignity, and feeding him from his own table, gave him a throne among the princes of his court, with whom he was henceforth to associate as a favorite of the king's; (See ii Kings, xxv. 27. &c.) how much more admirable is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, as *Hannah* says, i Sam. ii. 8. 'Raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the beggar from the dung-hill, to set them among the princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.' Christ gives those who had lost their all by sin, to possess substance, through his righteousness; having appointed them a kingdom, as it is appointed unto Him, of his Father. (See Luke, xxii. 29.) and in that kingdom they shall wear 'a crown of life,' be 'clothed with white robes,' of spotless innocence, and bear 'palms' of victory 'in their hands.' Then, 'they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. (Nothing shall incommode them any more,) for the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living

fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.—Well may those whom Christ has regenerated exclaim, saying, ‘Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.—Beloved now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.’

Thirdly, The Lord Christ moreover makes his people *Priests* unto God. The former advantage, of being made Princes or Kings, is more of a *personal* nature, while this of being constituted Priests unto God, has relation to the benefits they are made instrumental of conveying to *others* in the name of the living God. And while both are titles of honour, this latter title is of superior excellency; as will appear from the following extracts. In old times every man was priest in behalf of his own family, while the supreme magistrate was high-priest for the state which he governed, and in case of the rulers of two or more states being together at a public sacrifice, the honour of the priesthood was conferred upon the most excellent of these chieftains. See SHUCKFORD'S *Connections*, 8vo. 1808, Vol. ii. p. 189—204. And POTTER in his *Grecian Antiquities*, Book i. Chap. 2. observes, that ‘Performance of the solemn sacrifices, and the care of divine worship, was part of the king’s business. Thus *Virgil’s Anius*, was both king and priest.

Rex Anius, Rex idum hominum, Phœbique Sacredos,
(King Anius, King of men, Priest of Pheobus.)

And See HUTCHINSON’S VIRGIL.

‘Anius supreme of men, oft veils his crown
Without a blush to put the vervain on.’

We seldom meet with a sacrifice in *Homer*, but some of the heroes, and those the chief of all then present, are concerned in the performance of the Holy ceremonies; and so far was it from being thought a piece of condescension, or any way below their dignity and grandeur, that they thought it an accession to the rest of their honours; and the inferior worshippers were no less careful to reserve this piece of service for them, than they were to give them the most honourable places in the banquets, which

they refreshed themselves with, after the sacrifices were ended. Surely, there is no honour equal to that of dealing with God in behalf of our fellow-creatures, and being his messenger unto them for good ; yet, to this honour, all His saints are called, even while they remain in this mortal state, being exhorted to let their lights shine before men, that others may be led through seeing their good works, to glorify their Father, who is in heaven, *See Mat. v. 16.* Again, we are commanded to be active in the cause of the Lord, in the morning sowing our seed of religious instruction, and in the evening not withholding our hand, as we do not know which shall prosper, this or that, or whether both may not be good alike, *See Eccles. xi. 6.* Also, to pray to God in behalf of our families, our neighbours, the church, and the world, is the honourable employment, in which all who love God may and ought to be engaged. And I am inclined to believe, that the zealous disciples of Christ, who have laid themselves out to do good in the name of the Lord while upon earth, shall be honourably employed in the heavenly state itself, as the ministers of God for good, to the tribes of infants and accepted heathens, who shall be admitted into the glorious and everlasting kingdom of Christ the Redeemer. But, *See* Glorified state of the Church. One thing however is obvious, which is this, that but few pious persons depart this life, without regretting that they have not been more active for the honour of God, and for the good of souls. May the Lord bless us with zeal, success, and humility.—It appears proper to be observed, moreover, that our being honoured with the titles of Kings and Priests, is closely connected with our being *washed* in the blood of Christ ; for we are capable of receiving no honour, while we remain in our natural and sinful state ; and we cannot expect to be useful to others, if we are not holy both in heart and in life.—Those persons who enjoy the salvation of God in these respects, mentioned above, thankfully receive them as fruits of the love of Christ ; and amazed at his boundless mercy towards them, they cry with wonder and gratitude, *Unto Him that loved us, &c. be glory and dominion forever and ever, Amen.* Thus, believers gratefully express their desires, that the honour and dominion of Christ the

Lord, may be continued, even forever and ever. Because of His wisdom and love they would wish Him to reign forevermore, and because of the mercies they have received from Him, they are resolved to praise him while life shall last ; and to the countless ages of eternity, ascribing glory to God, and the Lamb, will be their delightful employment.

Ver. 7. *Behold, He cometh with clouds ; and every eye shall see him : and they also who pierced him ; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen.*

This passage which refers to the *second* coming of Christ, or his coming in order to judge mankind, shews *First*, The glory of the Judge. *Secondly*, The manner in which his coming concerns all men. *Thirdly*, The consternation of the wicked, and *Fourthly*, The joy of believers.—He who once made his appearance upon earth, as the babe of Bethlehem, and the man of sorrows ; poor, despised, and persecuted, ‘ shall (shortly) come in the glory of His Father with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his works.—‘ There is something, (says Murray in his Lectures,) very significant and simple in these words, *every eye shall see Him*. It does not say, that He shall be seen by Monarchs, Kings, Conquerors, and all their subjects, this would have been pompous but not significant ; but it mentions *every eye*, to shew that all men will then be alike, and equally concerned and interested. The rank of mankind will then be truly levelled, and every person will be concerned as an individual about his *own* affairs. No man will appear by representation or proxy ; but every one in his *own person*, and for his *own interest*, must stand before Jesus Christ.’ Thou must be there, O my soul ! and how wilt thou appear before the righteous Judge ? Murray observes, that ‘ when the Apostle adds, *and they also that pierced Him*, he introduces it exceedingly *apropos*. Those who pierced our Saviour, viz. the Jewish rulers, who had so much influence as to sanctify murder by a form of *law* and *religion*, and were not then brought to an account for their wicked deeds, shall, when Christ cometh, be obliged to stand before Him, as their Judge, and stand their trial like other sinful mortals. What an abject figure will arbi-

travelling monarchs, and tyrants, who have persecuted and oppressed mankind, to gratify their vile lusts and appetites, make; when they stand before the tribunal of the Man of God's right hand? Such enemies to mercy and justice as they, among all the tribes of men, shall wail because of Him. Because,—for what? because their own consciences will inform them what they deserve, and anticipate the sentence of the great Judge. What a sight this! to see those who have *plundered empires, sacked cities, slaughtered millions*, made widows and orphans wail and lament for the death of their *husbands and sires*; to see the *crowned heads and mitred brows*, all wringing their hands, gnashing their teeth, and cursing their fate; waiting for the final sentence: what a reverse! men who with their *nod* made nations *tremble*,—men who with their *votes* could have *sold or enslaved* Empires, all shivering, gnashing, and trembling before the face of the Lamb—the Saviour whom they despised, and whose people they oppressed. Persecutors of every age, nation, sect, and party, belong to the number of those who pierce the Lord Christ; since He considers that injury as offered to Himself, which is suffered by the weakest member of his mystical body. O let us beware, how we join the Persecutor in his acts of rage, or unite with the Scoffer in his expressions of contempt.—But let not the careless ones, who are too busily engaged in prosecuting their favourite schemes, to have time to step out of their way, either in *behalf* of, or in *opposition* to Religion, congratulate themselves on the wisdom of their conduct. Ye must also see the Judge, and hear him say, ‘these mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me.’ Neglecters of God's salvation, will find to their cost, that the unbelief in which they have lived is of a damning nature. Not a worldly-minded person but will *wail* and lament when Christ comes to judgment.—On the contrary, those who being regenerated by the Holy Ghost, have walked in the fear and love of God; rejoicing to see Jesus glorified, and in the near prospect of eternal redemption, hail the pleasing prediction with, ‘*even so, Amen,*’ or come Lord Jesus, come quickly; welcome, thrice welcome, blessed Saviour. For this appearance of the Lord Christ,

is that which all believers confidently expect, and ardently desire, whatever unbelievers may think thereof.

Ver. 8. *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.*

A, A, Alpha, being the first, and Ω, long O, Omega being the last letter of the Greek Alphabet, are used mystically to signify, *the Beginning and the Ending* or as it is expressed in ver. 11, *the First and the Last*; both of which phrases are of the same import as, *from everlasting to everlasting*, Ps. xc 2. Indeed, the latter part of the verse is an explanation to the former part, and *THE Alpha and Omega* is of the same import as *the Lord, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty*. For the explanation of this phrase, See ver. 4. but there, it was spoken of God the Father in the covenant of grace, or of the Deity impersonally considered; and here, it is claimed as equally belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ, or to the second person in the ever blessed Trinity. *The First and the Last*, as applied to the Lord Christ, is explained in the Lecture to the Church of Smyrna, Part First, i § 1. as is a phrase of similar import, viz, *The Beginning of the creation of God*; Church of Laodicea, Part First, i § 2.

Ver. 9. *I John, (who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,) was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

It was a time of affliction to the church, which suffered from the persecutor's rage; (for the treatment the first christians met with, See Church of Smyrna, Part Second, ii.) and John, the beloved disciple of the Lord Jesus, was their brother and companion in tribulation, drinking with them of the same bitter cup. It is reported in Ecclesiastical history, that the Emperor Domitian having seized John, at length caused him to be cast into a cauldron of boiling oil, and that as he was not killed by this, he was wonderfully restrained from commanding him to be executed any other way, but banished him to the island of Patmos. For an account of this Island, See Concise View of the Geo-

graphy of the Seven Churches. The following extract from BURDER'S *Commentary*, relates to the name by which this punishment is distinguished. 'In the Roman Law, it is called *capitis diminutio*, because the person thus banished was disfranchised, and the city thereby *lost an head*. It succeeded in the room of that ancient punishment, *aqua et igni interdicere*, whereby it was implied, that the man must, for his own defence, *betake himself into banishment*, when it became unlawful for any to accommodate him with lodging, diet, or any other necessary of life. But this banishing into islands was properly called *disportatio*, being accounted the worst kind of exile, whereby the criminal *forfeited his estate*, and being bound, and put on ship board, was, by public officers, transported to some certain island, (which none but the Emperor himself might assign,) there to be confined in perpetual banishment.'

The cause of John's sufferings, was no act of injustice or immorality of which he was guilty, but merely because of his preaching Christ, and His salvation. *Testifying of Jesus*, was crime sufficient to expose the primitive christians to every species of calamity, that the power and rage of earth and hell could inflict. But the Lord enabled his people to bear their sufferings for his sake, with that fortitude and meekness which became them as his disciples, and is called in the Text *the patience of Jesus Christ*. The *fortitude* with which the primitive christians, of both sexes, and of every age, and circumstance in life, bore their grievous calamities, excited the admiration of all who beheld them; but the *meekness* with which they conducted themselves, and the *good will* manifested by them to their slanderers, and murderers, quite overpowered many of their oppressors: who, owning themselves overcome by the dying love of Christ and his people, embraced that Gospel they had lately opposed.—

'O let us find the ancient way
The wondering World to move,
And force the Heathen for to say,
See, how these Christians love!'

John, by stiling himself their *brother*, and *companion in tribulation*,

3c. intimated that he suffered equally with themselves, in behalf of the *kingdom of Jesus Christ*.—Surely, that kingdom is not of this world, which is promoted by means of the *sufferings* of its respective members. And what feats of heroic zeal, may we not expect from those christian societies, who are taught by the Lord, and animated by the virtuous example of their pious and courageous leaders.—To conclude, this Book has always been high in the esteem of the *persecuted* members of Christ's mystical Body.

Ver. 10. *I was in the spirit on the Lord's-day ; and heard behind me a great voice as of a Trumpet.*

By the *Lord's-day*, we are to understand, the *first* day of the week, or the christian Sabbath : so called, 1st, Because Christ has taken it to be his lot, and special portion, among all the days of the week ; and took possession of it, as it were, in his resurrection. 2d, Because instituted by his authority as the Sacrament, is called *the Lord's-supper*. And 3d, Because applied to his worship and service.—May this ever be to us holy, and honourable, the delight of our souls. The phrase, *I was in the spirit*, does not refer to the devout state of John's mind upon this occasion, but is made use of to inform us, that he was in a rapture, or trance, under the immediate illumination, influence, and power of the Holy Spirit, during the whole of this wonderful vision : *Barker's Bible* renders it, ' I was ravished in spirit.' This phrase is repeated with a small variation, Chap. iv. 2.—xvii. 3. xxi. 10. and See, many passages in the prophecy of Ezekiel. *St Paul* declares, concerning the vision he had when caught up to the third heaven, that he does not know whether ' he was in the body or out of the body,' during the time of his extasy. Nothing, then, can be said, to determine whether John saw any part of the scenery, described in this Book, with his *bodily eyes*, or whether it was altogether an impression made upon his *mental powers*, by a spiritual agent. So little do we know of the world of spirits, and of the way in which we shall receive ideas, when the union of soul and body is dissolved. Suffice it to say, ' we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known.'

And I heard behind me a great voice as of a Trumpet. When

Jehovah descended on mount Sinai, to give the Law to Israel, his approach was announced by 'the voice of the Trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that were in the camp trembled.' Moreover, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes to summon mankind to appear before his bar, it is said that He 'shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the Trump of God.' This *great voice, as of a Trumpet*, was designed to awaken John's attention, and is a summons unto all the churches, to listen to what is spoken to them in the name of the Great King. May all our hearts reply, 'Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.'

Ver. 11. This great voice, which John heard, proclaimed, *First*, the Majesty of the Divine Personage, whose approach it denounced, *saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last.* See ver. 8. *Secondly*, The command was given, *what thou seest, write in a book*, i. e. faithfully record those things which are about to be revealed unto thee. *Thirdly*, For their own immediate instruction, and that they might communicate the same to the assemblies of Christ's people in general, John was commanded to *send the Book unto the seven churches which are*, were then, *in Asia*, viz, *unto Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.* For the account of these places, see *Brief Sketch of Geography*; and a fuller account will be given in the *History of Asia-Minor*.

We are not informed, whether John sent *one* or *seven* copies of this Book, to the churches of Asia-Minor. If he sent only one copy, it might be to the elders of the church of Ephesus, charging them to copy out fair transcripts for the other churches. But as he had time upon his own hands, and perhaps the messenger by whom he forwarded this Book might be able to copy for him, it is most probable, either that John wrote them all himself, or had it done under his own inspection. Thus, this Book would at once be secured from being destroyed, and not be liable to corruptions, by their being seven original copies, sent from the Apostle himself. And the exact and minute description of the respective characters, &c. of these several churches, with the suitable exhortations given unto each of them,

must, as *Dr Bruce Johnson* observes, not only have taught these churches their duty, but also have led them to acknowledge the inspiration of this Book. And to this truth, I apprehend all christians will be inclined to give their consent, who seriously consider the contents of these Epistles, which are of universal concern. 'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.' All these things are 'written for our learning,' or instruction in righteousness, 'that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.'

Ver. 12. *And I turned to see the voice that spake with me.*

The admiration of John, being excited at the majesty of this uncommon voice, as was the admiration of Moses, when he beheld the bush burning with fire, yet not being consumed thereby; he turned to see whether he could discover the person from whom it proceeded. God, who has formed the soul of man susceptible of the feelings of curiosity and admiration, designs that our attention should be attracted by things which are uncommon and magnificent; and, as the Vision before us possesses these qualities in a very considerable degree, those persons are highly culpable, who suffer the trifles of earth to engross their attention, to the neglect of the voice of Him that speaketh from heaven. The phrase, *I turned to see the voice that spake with me*, intimates the suddenness and fulness with which the vision presented itself before the writer; for when an uncommon or interesting sound is heard at a distance, and in an indistinct manner, we *listen* in order to obtain the surest and most full information. And there are *two* actions worthy of our attention, relating to this act of listening. *First*, We present the quick and comprehensive glance of the *Eye*, towards the apparent direction of the sound. *Secondly*, If nothing is *seen*, the Ear presents itself towards the point of expectation, and the Eye is bent on vacuity: but all this, it must be observed, passes in a single moment, and therefore many practice it without being conscious to themselves how they were affected. (See GILBERT AUSTIN'S *Ceironomia*, 4to, 1806, p. 488.) But the object presenting itself to the writer, as soon as he turned himself towards it, he had no need of passing from the *first* to the *second* attitude of listening,

as he beheld at the first glance of his Eye, the person from whom the voice that engaged his attention proceeded. Thus, it appears that what has sometimes been censured, as an uncouth phrase of speech, is in the strictest sense correct and pure.—I am confident, that it only requires a fuller knowledge of history and science, to make us esteem the Bible as the *best* and *most learned* of books.

Ver. 12—17. *And being turned, i. e. immediately as I had turned myself, I saw seven golden Candlesticks, or Lamp-stands; and in the midst of the seven Lamp-stands one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His Head and his Hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his Eyes were as a flame of fire; and his Feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his Voice as the the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven Stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged Sword: and his Countenance was as the Sun when he shineth in his strength.—And when I saw Him, I fell at his feet as dead.*

The glory of this vision was such, as filled the soul of the pious John with sacred reverence and overwhelming awe; yea, it was more than nature could sustain, and he fainted before the Divine presence. Thus, *Ezekiel* and *Daniel* felt their natures overwhelmed, when the Lord favoured them with visions somewhat similar. See *Ezek. i. 1—28.* compared with *ii. 1, 2.* and *Dan. x. 8—19.*—If these holy men, felt such overwhelming reverence, while beholding the visions of God, *sacred awe* is surely well becoming us, while reading the wonderful description: and we may rest assured, that none but those who read with holy reverence, will receive any advantage, by the manner in which they gaze upon the glory of the Lord.

The Vision appears to have opened itself in the following manner. *First*, John heard the loud voice as of a Trumpet, proclaiming, *I am Alpha and Omega*, &c. ver. 11.—*then*, having turned himself towards the part from which the voice seemed to proceed, he immediately beheld *seven golden Lamp-stands, and One like the Son of Man standing in the midst of these branches,*

arrayed somewhat like the Jewish high-priest in his pontifical robes, and the Hair of his head was of the purest *white*,—but his Eyes, which shone like *flames of fire*, were so intensely bright, that John, to relieve himself from their dazzling splendour, cast a glance downwards and beheld the *Feet* of this majestic Personage, and they appeared unto him *like unto fine brass, as if they were glowing in the furnace*; and as to *His Voice*, it was as the *sound of many waters*,—after this view, taken of the Feet of the divine Manifestation, John looked upwards again, and he beheld in *His right hand seven Stars*; and also a *sharp Sword with two edges*, seemed to proceed out of *His Mouth*,—but, by this time, *His Countenance* was grown so excessive bright and dazzling, like unto the *Sun* when he *shineth in his strength*, without any cloud or mist to soften his flaming rays, that John was quite overwhelmed, and fainted before Him.

As various parts of this wonderful and august appearance are referred to by the Lord, in the introduction to one or another of the Epistles to the Seven Churches, I shall have the less occasion to enlarge in this place, several particulars being pretty fully considered in the *Critical and Practical Lectures* on these Epistles. For the explanation of the *seven golden Lamp-stands*, as pointed out by the Lamp-stand with seven branches in the Temple, and by the golden Lamp-stand of Zechariah (Chap. iv. 11. 12.) See Church of *Ephesus*, Part First, § i.—The Glorious Person, who appeared in the midst of the golden branches of this mystical Lamp-stand, is said to be *like unto the Son of Man*. The *Son of Man*, is a title born by the Lord Jesus Christ, since He is become *incarnate* for our sakes, and refers to his manifestation in the likeness of sinful flesh.—O how reviving it is to consider, that He, who assumed human nature that he might suffer for our sakes; has entered into heaven with this human nature, and appears there in glory, as the Forerunner of all those who believe.—He was *clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle*. Long garments in the East, are appendages of nobility and royalty. (See CALMET'S *Fragments*, No 62. Arabian Dresses, Plate ii. See, also *Dresses of the High Priest of the Jews*. *Fragments*, No 237 and 238.

See, moreover, a copy of some very ancient and interesting figures, being the *Images of Baal and Moloch*, on horse back, with long Robes; *Scripture Illustrated by Natural Science*. Amos v. 26. Figure i. to ix.) Thus, the Lord Jesus appeared arrayed as a King; He was also, *girt about the Breasts with a golden Girdle*. The idea presented by this image is twofold; viz, Majesty and Repose. *First*, The golden girdle is, like the long robes, an appendage of royalty. For the golden girdle of the High Priest, see Exodus, xxxix 5. *Secondly*, Being *girt about the breasts*, supposes a state of *rest*, or repose; persons on a journey, and those engaged in any laborious employment, were wont to gird up the loins, especially if the garments they wore were long and flowing. The appearance of the Lord, therefore, girt round the breasts with a golden girdle, intimates His toils being ended, and his having entered into *rest*; See Heb. iv. 10. He who was once condemned as a malefactor, is now worshipped as the King of glory; and, He who once laboured and toiled upon earth, is now forever 'seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high.' Yet, He is not unmindful of his church, but walks in the midst of the golden Lamp-stands, to examine into their affairs, as also to defend, reprove, and comfort the churches of his saints, according as their several circumstances require. So the priest of old ministered to the emblematical Lamps; See Exodus, xxvii. 21. and so we should pray to the Lord, saying, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'—*His head and his hairs*, i. e. the hairs of his head, were *white like wool, as white as snow*. 'Wool is commonly supposed to be an emblem of Eternity;' (*Wesley*.) And the Lord Christ is thus pointed out to us as being 'the Ancient of days,' whom *Daniel* (Chap. vii. 9.) saw in his visions, 'whose garments were white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool.' The *purity* of the White, both in *Dan.* and the *Rev* seems designed to signify the *spotless holiness* of the Lord our God. Christ is the *everlasting I AM*; He is the *spotless Saviour*.—O Lord, save us from our sins, and at length receive us unto Thy everlasting kingdom.

D

—And His Eyes were as a flame of Fire : yea, His countenance was as the Sun when he shineth in his strength. In addition to what is said, on this subject, Church of *Thyatira*, Part First, i § 1, I would observe, that there is no branch of philosophy that is attended with greater difficulties, than the different phenomena of Light, by which is meant that principle or substance, (which ever it be,) by which objects are made perceptible to our sense of seeing. Light, is obtained from different visible sources, as from the sun and stars. It is procured by means of combustion, by heat, by friction, and by percussion. It is also emitted by certain bodies during decomposition, and by other bodies in full vigour. Among luminous substances, are different *Insects* and *Zoophytes*, and *Molluscous-worms*. I expect all my readers know something of *Glow-worms*, and referring the curious to the article *Living Luminous Substances*, (See *ENCYCLOPEDIA*.) I only add, that the streams of light which issue from the *Elater-Noctilucus* are so strong in the night, that even the smallest print may be read by their lustre. Thus the *Eyes* of the Lord Jesus being compared to *flames of Fire*, is not without its analogy in the natural world. All animals of the order *Feræ*, and even some others, emit light, when rubbed in the dark : this order of animals are remarkable for seeing best by night, and what is still more remarkable, the glare of their eyeballs, in certain cases, shine like torches. Travellers have often observed this fact, in relation to the Tiger, the Panther, the Wolf, &c. and even the eyes of the common Cat shine at night.* The only remaining question is, Does the light which appears to stream forth from the eyes of these animals, &c. afford them any

* *Tasso*, the poet, alludes to this circumstance, in a pretty sonnet, which he addressed to his Cat, entreating her to assist him during the night with the lustre of her eyes, he having no candle by which he could see to write his verses. ‘Non avendo candele per iscrivere i susi versi.’—So that the idea of the eyes of these animals emitting light is quite classical. *WESLEY*, in his *Philosophy*, Vol. i, p. 62, maintains, that in some circumstances the eyes of the human species may do the same. His words are, ‘In some men the *Iris* has a faculty of darting out light. Dr *Willis* mentions one, who after drinking wine plentifully, could see to read in the darkest night. And *Pliny* records of *Tiberius Cæsar*, that if he waked in the night, he could see every thing, for awhile, as in the broad daylight. Dr *Briggs* gives a parallel instance of a gentleman in *Bedfordshire*.’

advantage in discovering their prey? Most certainly it does; and, hence without perplexing ourselves with philosophical questions, relative to the *nature* of Light, I turn to the figure of the Text, and say that *Eyes of Flame, and a Countenance shining like the Sun in his strength*, are suitable emblems by which to denote, the piercing *Omniscience* of the Lord Jesus Christ, who as the uncreated SUN, irradiates all things, by glorious light proceeding from Himself.—O Lord, ‘Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?—If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me; yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee.’—*And his Feet were like unto fine Brass, as if they burned, or glowed, in a furnace.* I expect there is an allusion here to *Ezra*, viii. 27. where we read of ‘basons of gold—and two vessels of *fine* copper, precious as gold,’ or equal to gold in value. The LXX. render it *χαλκὸς τριβοῖος* *shining Copper*, apparently meaning the same kind of composition as does *Homer*, by *χαλκὸν ερυθρὸν*, *red Copper*, *Il*, ix. line 365. the Latin is *æs rubrum*, *red Brass or Copper*, (for the ancients had no proper name by which to distinguish these metals from each other,) *Pope*, renders it *shining Brass*, retaining the more *general* idea of *brightness* of appearance, but, (I think,) improperly dropping the *particular* circumstance of a peculiar *redness* of colour. *Bochart*, Vol. iii. p. 881, 882, mentions two kinds of *Aurichalcum*, or Copper, one of which was of small value, and the other esteemed equal in value to Gold. To wave disputes on this subject, I suspect that by *fine Brass*, we are to understand, a metal compounded of Gold, Silver and Copper; as such Brass would not contract rust, or verdigrise which is a species of defilement, it furnishes a proper emblem of the *purity* of the Divine proceedings: and See Church of *Thyatira*, Part First, i § 2.—*And His Voice was as the sound of many waters.* A similar expression is used *Ezek.* xliii. 2. and *Ps.* xciii. 4. and seems designed to set forth the power that accompanies the signification of His will, who, in the beginning, ‘spake and it was done; commanded and it stood fast.’ Whose powerful voice called Laza-

rus out of the grave, where he had lain three days, and who will shortly summons all nations to appear before Him, 'for the hour is coming, in which *all* that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God,—and shall come forth.'—'Oh, how great is the majesty of that Being, whose voice in the giving of the law from mount Sinai, shook the earth and caused it to tremble, and hath promised, saying, yet once more, I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.'—*And, He had in his right hand seven Stars*; here it must be noted, that these seven Stars are not in addition to the seven Flames, attached to the seven Candlesticks or Lamp-stands, but they are *the* lights with which these Lamp-stands shine. This observation appears the more necessary to me, because of the misapprehension some of my readers may have formed, from seeing Prints in which the Lord Christ stands, dressed as described in this vision, in the midst of seven candlesticks, each furnished with a lighted candle, in addition to the seven stars which he holds in his right hand. A Candle, or a Lamp, is a mere *instrument* of light, i. e. a collection of materials adapted to give light, when acted upon in a particular manner; but it is very certain, that the tallow and cotton which compose a candle, or the oil and wick with which the lamp is furnished, emit no light until they are ignited, or *light up*, as we speak, and then they send forth streams of light in every direction.* From the account given by *John*, I apprehend, he first saw the Lord Christ in the midst of the seven Lamp-stands; the lamps not shining, *See* ver. 12. 13. He then viewed the glorious Personage, till the brightness of His Eyes of flame caused him to turn his attention to his lower parts, in order to recover himself a little from the shock his sight had received by gazing at the countenance of the Lord. *See*, Opening of the Vision, as above, p. 25. And, now on looking up again, he saw the Lamps light up in such a manner, that the flames which

* This idea, relative to the different manner in which we ought to conceive of an *instrument* of Light, and that instrument actually *emitting* Light, is by no means novel; but is particularly noted by Moses, in the account he gives us of the creation of the heavenly bodies. *See*, Gen. i. 14. 15. and PARKHURST'S *Grammatical Praxis on Gen. i.*

shone upon them, appeared as seven Stars in the right hand of the Lord Jesus Christ. For the manner in which the Lord supports and operates by his ministering servants, compared to stars in his right hand, *see Church of Ephesus*, Part First, i § 1.—
And out of his Mouth went a sharp two-edged Sword. BURDER, in his *Commentary*, observes, that ‘This representation appears to correspond with the practice of some people with respect to this weapon. *Thevenet* (Part i. p. 229.) has mentioned an incident which throws considerable light upon this subject; his words are—‘The galliot being out a cruising, met with a Turkish galliot, from which, after having laid her athwart hauze, they met with a stout resistance. The Turks who were on board of her, *having a naked Sword between their teeth*, and a musket in their hands, beat off their adversaries.’—I presume the sword was held between the teeth, or in the mouth of these Turks, in order that they might at once lay their hands upon it, as soon as they had fired their muskets, or an occasion offered itself of making use of the sword against their adversaries. In case of the sword being very long, the person putting it between his teeth would be apt to be incumbered by it, but a short sword, and the swords of the ancients were in general very short, would not often be found to give this inconvenience. Thus, as *Burder*, moreover, observes, ‘the figure of a sword issuing from the mouth, seems as if it might be justified by matter of fact, and this expression may rank among those which occurrent circumstances may have formed.’ In addition to what is said concerning this figure, *Church of Pergamos*, Part First, § i. I beg leave to present my readers with the following quotation: ‘And then shall that *wicked-one* be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.’—*And His Countenance was as the Sun* when he *shineth in his strength*. The glory of heavenly beings is inconceivably great, for St John, in describing the *appearance* of one of the angelic host, says, ‘I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power, and the earth was lightened with his glory,’ Chap. xviii. 1.—If the courtiers of heaven are so bright, with what brilliancy must He shine, who is the

brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of his person.' When the Lord Christ appeared to Saul, in the way to Damascus, he beheld 'a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about him, and them who journeyed with him.' Yea, such is the splendour of the glorified person of the Lord Jesus, that the holy city, the new Jerusalem, as it appeared to John in vision, 'had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.' Let us with sacred awe, and lively gratitude, contemplate the glory of the exalted Redeemer.—*John* felt sacred awe, *falling at His feet as dead*, ver. 17. *Ezekiel* and *Daniel*, were affected in a similar manner, see p. 25, and the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders, are represented (Chap. iv. 10.) as worshipping Him who liveth forever and ever; and as casting their crowns before the throne.

But, blessed be God, *Reverence* is not the only disposition of mind that we are called to cherish, when contemplating His glory; encouraging *Hope* and lively *Gratitude*, are derived from the same source. What encouragement must John have felt, when the Lord of glory *laid his right hand upon him, saying, Fear not*, ver. 17. In a manner similar to this, the Lord strengthened his servants *Ezekiel* (ii. 1—2.) and *Daniel*, (x. 10.) when they fainted by reason of the glory of the vision with which they had been favoured.—They have nothing to fear, from the glorious appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, who believe in Him with the heart unto righteousness; for he is not only the friend of such characters, and his appearance is to their salvation, but moreover, 'when He shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' Yea, at His coming, He 'shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.' It is indeed, a blessed hope, to which believers are regenerated, by means of the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

The following sentences, ver. 17—18. relate to Christ, 1st, In his *Divine* nature; 2d, As *incarnate* for our sakes; 3d, As exercising universal *authority*. First, As God, He is *The First and the Last*; i. e, the Being who is without beginning of days or

end of years ; and *see* ver. 8, and Church of *Smyrna*, Part First, i § 1. *Secondly*, As God *incarnate* for our sakes, He saith, *I am He that liveth, and was dead : and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen.* He laid down his life for our sakes, and for our sakes he took it up again ; and now he appears in glorified humanity at the right hand of the Majesty on high ; and *see* Church of *Smyrna*, Part First, i § 2. *Thirdly*, The Lord Christ, as the glorified Head of the church, and the great Governor of the world, exercises divine authority over universal nature, according to the tenure of that covenant, in virtue of which He says, ‘ All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth.’ Thus saith Christ, *I have the keys of hell and of death*, i. e. have power over death and the grave. In addition to what is said, Church of *Philadelphia*, Part First, i § 3. concerning the Key being used for the emblem of *power, authority.* &c. over—; *See CALMET’S Fragments*, No 211. Gates of Hell, Hades, *the covered place*, or the Grave, i. e. the entrance into the Grave, or as we speak, ‘ Death’s door.’ Death, the devourer of mankind, does not ravage abroad according to his own pleasure, but must obtain leave from the Lord Christ, before he can seize upon any of His followers, and convey them down to the chambers of the Grave. Yea, and when they are laid there, and imprisoned in his dark domain, *He that liveth and was dead*, has dominion over the Grave to open its prison doors, and set the captives free ; for ‘ the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.’—Happy, thrice happy ! they who know that the Almighty-God, the Incarnate-Saviour, and the Exalted-Redeemer is their Friend.

Ver. 19. John receives a *fresh* command from the Lord, (*See* ver. 11,) to *write* for the good of the church, *the things, First, which he had seen ;* i. e. in vision already. These are written, ver. 11—18. *Secondly, and which are ;* i. e. the instructions relating to the present state, of these emblematical churches. These are written Ch. ii. and iii. *Thirdly, and which shall be hereafter,* i. e. those things which shall come to pass to the end of time ; and relating to the life to come. These are written, Ch. iv. to xxii. (*Wesley’s Notes.*)—By this means the church is furnished with, a glorious view of the essen-

tial nature, and relative characters of the Lord Jesus Christ ; diversified reproofs, and encouragements, suited to the state of every christian society, in all nations and ages of the world ; and a grand chain of interesting prophecies, that carry us down to the final state of the two opposite kingdoms of darkness and of light. During this period, ‘ Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried ; but the wicked shall do (will continue to do) wickedly ; and none of the wicked shall understand : but the wise shall understand.’ And thou, my reader, whosoever thou art, ‘ go thy way till the end be, for thou shalt stand in thy lot, (whether it be with the wicked, or with the just,) at the end of the days.’

Ver. 20. John is commanded to write, *the mystery* ; i. e. the mysterious signification of the seven Stars, which he had seen in the right hand of the Lord, and also of the seven golden Candlesticks, or Lamp-stands, in the midst of which he had beheld the Church’s Glorified Head. Now, the seven Stars, mentioned ver. 16. are the Angels, or Pastors, who rule or preside over the seven Churches. Concerning this title of the Ministers of Christ, see *General Observations*, § ii. And, it is moreover added, *the seven Candlesticks which thou sawest, are the seven Churches*. A golden Lamp-stand, is a very significant emblem of a christian church, which is prepared and designed by the Lord, to afford spiritual instruction to all around them. But, see *Church of Ephesus*, Part Ist, i. and also *General Observations*, § vi. To the churches of His saints, taught by the Word, and supplied by the grace of God, the Lord Jesus says, ‘ ye are the light of the world—Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.’ And that this may be the case, I commit you to the grace of God, saying, ‘ Jehovah bless thee, and keep thee—Jehovah make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee—Jehovah, lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.’

FINIS.